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Mrs Henry W. Peacock

Compliments of the Author

Henry D. Northrop

June 1899.

TWIN SOULS

A

PSYCHIC ROMANCE

BY

HENRY D. NORTHROP

PHILADELPHIA
A. S. HATHEWAY & CO.
111 North Fifteenth Street

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AMONG the dreamy groves and vales of Greece,
Dwelt Psyche, young god Cupid's love and pride,
A maid to whom no charm had been denied,
Eyes deep with spirit, head a golden fleece,
Whom jealous Venus fanged and robbed of peace.
Loved, lovely goddess, day by day she died,
Yet, of immortal life the deathless bride,
Through gates of light she sprang to her release.
So—says the story—fares the sighing soul,
All whitened in the bath of cleansing fire,
Eager to gain the laurel and the goal,
And in its great quest ever struggling higher.
Well for thee, soul, to dwell where pangs have birth,
Be schooled, and then rise, mistress over earth!

Ильг

Scene I.

A Summer Resort by the Sea.

I

IT was the gala time of June,
Earth, air and sky in rhythmic tune,
Life throbbing in the stem and leaf,
Young cereals hasting to the sheaf,
Birds fluting to the pearly dawn,
Blithe children chirping on the lawn,
The myriad wheels in summer's loom
All humming, with a movement free,
To weave the green, to weave the bloom,
Of virgin dress from sea to sea.

II

By dreams of relaxation led,
Conrad the wearying town had fled,
As in old fables that relate
The Grecian god's propitious fate,

Great Hercules unbound the chain,
And gave Prometheus life again:
Fled from the din, dust, merchandise,
To winds, to clouds, to vales, to skies,
And where the proud, high-vaulting sea
Wars with scarred cliffs, God's masonry.

There purple mists creep o'er the main,
There white sails go and come again,
Sweet sea-songs lull the dreamy night,
The whitecaps dawn with morning's light,
The great sun, hot and fiery red,
Sinks down into his ocean bed,
And straight, from where he dips his rim
Beneath the far horizon dim,
A rosy path, traced by his beams,
Athwart the waters brightly gleams,
As if it were a heavenly street,
Paved o'er the brine for angels' feet.

III

"On time, I see," did Conrad say,
"He promised he would write to-day."
[Opens and reads a letter.

GORDON TO CONRAD.

DEAR C——

In unrest I have roamed up and down,
Since you and your baggage departed from town.
Such a feeling of loneliness over me crawls,
That I have to resort to society calls,
Which I do, let me say, with some show of disdain,
Since only few belles in the city remain,
And these, with the advent of this summer weather,
Are hastily packing to flee, all together.

The first one I visited owned with a smile,
She'd been waiting to get from dear Paris the style
Of the bathing suit fashion this year has imported—
More neat than the one that last summer she sported—
The big, clumsy thing that her mother had bought her,
Which at least half enveloped her when in the water.

Miss Ethel, the charmer, I called on last night;

She was languid and dull, though she tried to be bright;
However, of you she could easily speak,
And your name brought a flush to her young, girlish cheek.
I fancied her heart was suppressing a grief
That has waited and languished in vain for relief,
Yet the lingering shadow, so easy to trace,
Only heightened the charms of her ideal face.
I never could win her but could, were I you—
A deliberate statement I know to be true.

Say, where is the man who could turn from those eyes,
Whose beauty an angel might covet and prize?
At the feet of that goddess what man would not kneel?
Do you think I am crazy?—I speak as I feel.
Were she mine I would worship the ground 'neath her feet,
And would reckon the bliss of my heaven complete.

I see I am gossiping—although a man,
Which I did not intend to do when I began,
But mainly I wanted to thank you, my friend,
For the portrait that you were so kind as to send.
'Tis the face of your sister as I saw her last,
Ere from our sad eyes like a vision she passed.
That you loved her with passion as pure as the light,
Was plain long before she had vanished from sight,
And now that your life is not warmed by her breath,
Your thought of that loved one is hallowed by death;
You suffer, I know, and your heart is bereft—
All the more, I am sure, as no other is left.

You twain dawned on earth, as it were, hand in hand,
Twin souls that were landed on life's mystic strand;
Clasped together alike in a mother's embrace,

Each saw the bright heaven that dawned in her face;
Side by side you grew up and your lives were but one,
As into one beam glide two beams of the sun.
Quite different you if she never had been,
This rarest of earth, now among the unseen.

Still lingers the fragrance her blooming life gave,
Though twice have the daisies grown over her grave;
It is time now to soften the pangs of regret,
Though the time will not come for your heart to forget.

The hour is late—I must bid you adieu;
Let me state this intention and then I am through:
I'm impatient, dear fellow, to get my vacation,
Unlimber the traces in brisk recreation,

And so I am hoping it will not be long
Before I can mingle with you in the throng
That saunters in leisure along the cool shore,
Where tides come and go and the white breakers
roar.

Don't captivate all the fair belles you may
meet,
And leave me, quite vanquished, to beat a
retreat.
As I'm perfectly well, I can stand the hard strain
Of leaving the city awhile to remain
At a fashion resort for my health. Very soon
We will watch the waves dance in the light of
the moon.
Till then I will wish you bright days by the sea,
Remaining as ever,

Yours cordially,

G——.

IV

Ships carry gold, but letters more,
Ships only sail from shore to shore,

Ships join in one realms far apart,
But letters marry heart to heart;
They dwarf the freight that sails the sea
By heavier freight of destiny.
Though fire burn the written scroll,
Deep are the words cut in the soul,
And what we think and what we feel
Are graven plain in more than steel.
Worn mail-bags, packed with white contents,
Are tumbled out, crammed with events,
And fate of years, men, empires, all
May hang upon a thoughtless scrawl.

Moved by this letter, Conrad stood
In sorrowful, abstracted mood;
Each time its pages he perused
He grew more troubled and confused,
And, lost to what was passing round,
He bent his eyes upon the ground,
Then lifting up his tearful gaze,
And starting from his dreamy maze,
Seemed struggling fiercely to control
The wild emotions of his soul.

All silently in Conrad's breast
There glowed a love, not yet confessed
By outward look, or word, or sign,
That worshipped at fair Ethel's shrine:
No need for aught to be related,
Save as this central fact is stated.
Unguessed by Gordon, and unguessed
By Ethel, too, still it possessed
His being, yet to him alone
The passion of his heart was known.

V

'Twere not unfitting here to mention
That Conrad quickly drew attention
As one who in himself combined
Rare qualities of heart and mind—
An honor to his family name,
To fortune born, perchance to fame

Of strong and stately build was he,
With muscles firm to that degree

Which suits the athlete and the sport,
The player in the tennis-court,
The runner, bent on swiftest pace,
Or rower in a champion race.
His form was cast in graceful mould,
His manners easy, yet not bold,
His forehead clear as Alpine snow,
And eyes enkindled with the glow
Of gentle heart and sturdy mind,
By culture's plastic touch refined.
In every feature one might scan
The marks of nature's nobleman.

Nor could he quite escape those eyes
So ready to discern a prize
In one whose youth and social station,
With other things in combination,
Showed him to be as fine a fish
As any one would ever wish
To swim in summer pond or brook,
And slyly tempt to try the hook.
Beset by most adroit advances,
He never was without his chances.

Dame Gossip, as one might suppose,
To the occasion grandly rose,
Took his affairs at once in hand,
And 'mong the loungers on the strand,
In circumstantial manner told
His pedigree, his wealth, how old
He was, and things he never knew—
All solemnly affirmed as true—
What anxious belles were spying him,
What shrewd mammas were eyeing him,
To whom he nodded on the beach,
To whom addressed his courteous speech,
How invitations by the score
Upon him every day would pour,
To drive, or lunch, or take a ride
With some fair charmer by his side,
Till rumors multiplied and grew,
And wise ones whispered that they knew
He was engaged to so and so—
"An actual fact," they'd have you know—
Whereas, if he had been inclined
To wed the crowd to him assigned,
He would have been, with such a list,
A full-grown, rank polygamist.

VI

It happened that a company,
All young, and each a votary
Of wholesome pleasure, had arranged
Informally, by notes exchanged,
And verbal invitations given,
Their dull diversions to enliven
By taking, on some pleasant day,
A breezy boat ride down the bay.

'Twas something more than a diversion,
For, leaving out that day's excursion,
No written pages would, perchance,
Have traced this history's romance.

Scene II.

The Gallant Sailboat.

I

HIGH noon had dried the morning dew,
Old Æolus his warm winds blew,
The wavelets washed the gleaming strand
And flung their foam upon the sand,
The bathers shouted in their glee,
As, splashing in the genial sea,
They dipped beneath the waves and then,
With each new breaker, plunged again.
The young, the old looked on and laughed,
With freshened cheeks the breeze they quaffed,
Bright children frolicked on the beach,
And accents of their prattling speech
Joined with the surf-song, loud and clear,
In music dulcet to the ear.

The fashion of the town was there
To breathe the cool and bracing air:

The men of mind, the men of wealth,
The men who, in pursuit of health,
Take pills and potions for their ills—
Dull headaches, sideaches, sweats and chills—
And, skipping off from work and care,
Take once a year a breath of air.

And women, pale and melancholy,
Burned out by fashion's winter folly,
Like eastern queens were decked and dressed,
Just to lie by and take a rest.
These drooping willows, day by day,
In stupid languor seemed to say,
"Life somewhere on this dismal sphere
May be worth living, but not here."

Not such the sprightly, merry party,
Young maidens bright and fellows hearty,
Who stood with Conrad on the shore,
Where break the waters evermore.
Among the group that clustered there,
Could there be found a mated pair,

Who, come what might of wind and weather,
Would sail life's rumpled sea together?

II

Last time when Conrad o'er the flood
Beneath the canvas gaily rode,
There sat in beauty by his side,
His other self, his cherished pride,
One who had shared his life's delight,
His sister Constance, who, in night
Had died, as dies the golden day,
Borne on dark pinions swift away—
Night to his heart, dread, cold, forlorn—
To her, the glad, eternal morn!

By Gordon's letter all anew
Her vanished life was brought to view,
Yet no reminder did he need
Of griefs that had not ceased to bleed.
What wonder if, as gliding there
O'er waves, beneath that June day's glare,
He seemed to see her spectral boat

Beyond the dark horizon float,
And thought, "She's crossed the chilly main,
The harbor reached, and ne'er again
The winds her phantom sails will fill—
Yet I am sailing, sailing still!"

Such thoughts o'erwhelmed him all the more,
Since in the bark that lightly bore
Him swiftly onward, there sat one,
Whose brown hair, straying o'er her brow,
And features, beaming in the sun,
Made him, bewildered, half avow
Constance was sailing with him now.

III

The boat, impatient of delay,
With spreading, white wings flew away,
Pushed its bold venture more and more,
Left far behind the fading shore,
And glided on, swan-like and free,
A thing of life, sylph of the sea.
The speed grew swift, each eager sail

Swelled as it caught the gentle gale,
And so, with canvas all unfurled,
Around the prow the waters curled,
And wreaths of spray, formed one by one,
Made rainbows in the shining sun.

The lively breeze then stiffer grew,
The sail-boat leaped and darted through
Each billow as it struck her breast,
Or, mounting upward, skimmed the crest,
Plunged down into the hollow graves,
Made by the fast-advancing waves,
Then rose again with graceful bound,
Wet with the white-caps splashing round,
And in her frolicsome advance,
Moved like a maiden in the dance.
Careening low upon her side,
No bird that cuts the air could glide
More deftly than she gaily flew,
Light-hearted, o'er the waters blue.

IV

And just as gay were those on board,
Their youthful spirits in accord.

As well-tuned strings wake with a thrill,
Touched by the harpist's facile skill,
So these young hearts were in attune,
And carolled like the birds of June.
The pleasure-seekers, side by side,
Rode with the wind, rode with the tide,
While sparkling jest and blithesome song,
And bursts of laughter, loud and long,
Spontaneous mirth and shouts of glee,
Went floating o'er the ruffled sea.

Then music's sweet and mellow strain
Was wafted o'er the misty main.
Far down the bay was seen to float
A weather-worn yet buoyant boat.

[*All intently listen.*

THE BOATMEN'S SONG.

Come, sport with the sea-gull—come, ride on the billows,
Come, dance with the mermaids upon the wave's crest;
The sea is the mother that fondles and pillows
Our loved little craft on her passionate breast.

We dip the long oars in the swift-flowing tide,
We shoot the sharp prow through the white, splashing foam,
Fast away—far away o'er the waters we glide,
And, jubilant, sing to the winds as we roam.

We have bronze on our cheeks and we carry the traces
Of storm and of sun as we bend to the oar,
The tales of the deep you may read in our faces,
And hear in our ballads the hoarse tempest's roar.

Eyes fired with love scan the wide waters o'er,
Breasts beat with the wavelets that strike our light craft;
To the watchers who wait on the dim, distant shore,
Our thoughts and heart messages fondly we waft.

Now away, brave and gay, through the mist and the spray,
With cradle-like motion
We toss on the ocean,

And murmuring waters around the boat play;
We are gallant and merry,
And our dull cares we bury
Down deep in the caves of the wide-spreading bay.

V

In cadence soft the boatmen's lay
Breathed out its life and died away.

Conrad was mute, nor could he quell
The feeling that within him stirred,
The headstrong tides that rose and fell,
The tears that thick his vision blurred.
This very song, by Constance sung,
Oft in his listening ear had rung,
And while the boat with life was bounding,
Her voice across the waves was sounding.
He turned his face. Broad overhead
The canvas to the winds was spread.
His heart exclaimed, "O friendly sails,
Fly, fly! Through breakers, darkness, gales,
If these must be, swift onward soar,
And bear me to the farther shore!"

On wings of cloud the flitting sun
Gave signal that the day was done;
The boat sped backward to the shore,
The breezes slept, the ride was o'er.
And yet not ended was the ride,
Nor will be ended while the tide
Of coming ages onward rolls,
And bears the fate of human souls.

What shifting fortunes time doth bring,
To what strange purposes we cling,
How tiny sands to mountains grow,
How much we dream, how little know!

That day on Conrad beamed a face
Of tender beauty, artless grace,
Which, though unseen by him before,
Allured his vision more and more;
And when the boat's prow touched the land,
To Gladys did he give his hand,
While she alighted on the strand.

Scene III.

In the White Mountains.

I

ETHEL had fled the city's heat,
And sought the uplands' cool retreat,
Where summer sings in rippling rills,
And idly dreams among the hills.

The cool breeze from the mountain's peak
But little tinged her comely cheek;
No sunbeam glinted in her eye,
No stars by night shone in her sky,
But rather did she dream and brood,
And woo the haunts of solitude.
There, wand'ring by the mountain stream,
More fair and lovely did she seem,
If that were possible, than when,
A social queen, adored by men,
She reigned in majesty complete,
With crazed admirers at her feet.

Her charms of person drew the gaze
Of every eye, and then the praise
Of every lip. She was the morn,
Of light and radiant beauty born.

In ancient fable it was said
Some darts of Cupid were of lead,
Which, when they struck, would surely prove
To turn the heart away from love;
Yet other arrows gleamed with gold,
Of which in story it was told,
That when they struck, love's passion burned,
And to its object quickly turned.
Swift from its bow the golden dart
Had deeply pierced fair Ethel's heart,
And empires opened to her view—
Yet could she conquer and march through?

Half thinking that her heart was free,
Her heart was yonder by the sea.

[*She takes pen and paper and writes.*

ETHEL'S LETTER TO GLADYS.

MY FAITHFUL FRIEND:

How does it seem to be a graduate,
All through with musty text-books, which I freely own I hate,
Having mastered propositions in geometry with ease,
And ready for a proposition different from these?
Believe me, I'll be happy when my last school-year has fled,
The study and the toil of which fill me with secret dread;
I don't expect to reach the rank you easily attained,
Or boast one half the learning which your diligence has gained,
And should I ask you frankly for a reason, I suppose
You'd give me some sly hints about my having many beaux;
Yet honestly I tell you that I do not care a rush
For all their ardent compliments and sweet, endearing "gush."

Can woman have a preference and make an
honest choice?
In matters that decide her fate is she to have no
voice?
Some people—so at least their words would lead
one to surmise—
Regard her love much as they would if it were
merchandise—
And for no other purpose does she draw her
breath and live,
Except to fill the orders any simpleton may give.
It means—you have a heart and this sappy youth
would win it;
Please give it your attention and fall in love this
minute.

I know my mind, dear Gladys, and would
never once confess
To having no affection that I might perchance
express.
Schoolgirls are very much alike I am inclined to
think,
And when they reach love's Rubicon and stand
upon the brink,

They do not shrink and shiver long, and fear to launch away,
But most heroic courage do they commonly display.
However that may be, my friend, of one thing I am sure—
The most of men I yet have met I never could endure.
I say the most. If all were such within my vision's scope,
Quite likely you would view me as a sour misanthrope.

Six bouquets of sweet roses on the table in my room—
What lovely floral beauties, and what delicate perfume!
All are the gifts, with compliments, of young bloods, rich and gay—
I think more of their roses than of them, I'm free to say.
Perhaps I'm selfish, Gladys dear, perhaps I'm cold and vain,

But really I am frank enough to write in just this strain.

Your letter found me desolate up in the mountains here,
And gave my weary heart a gleam of wholesome, friendly cheer.
I seem like some lone bird which, having built her early nest,
And made a little home wherein her tired wing may rest,
Has seen the bough that swung it broken by the careless gale,
And felt upon her feathered breast the pelting of the hail.
This life of ours, this morning life—'tis beautiful I know,
Yet while I write I see the plains where shadows come and go.
The heart is woman's crown, 'tis said, and this I'll not deny,
But that which makes her queenly, also makes her weep and die.

Once more excuse my frankness. When your friendly letter came,
And, picturing the boat ride, mentioned one familiar name,
I envied you your pleasure more than any words can tell—
And with this plain confession, I remain
Your friend,
ETHEL.

P. S. You know the saying that a postscript always goes
With every woman's letter; so of course I cannot close
My missive all at once. A sweet wild flower from the glen
Will say perhaps to Conrad what I cannot with my pen.
This innocent remembrance I will venture thus to send.
Please hand it to him, and oblige
Your ever faithful friend.

II

In Conrad's heart a passion dwelt,
Unspoken yet, though truly felt,
Which scarcely dared to hope or dream
That one transporting, radiant gleam
From Ethel's eyes on him would fall;
Yet now 'twas easy to recall
Some words half meant and half in jest,
Some looks half given, half repressed,
That clothed the little mountain flower
With deep significance and power.

This from the first had been his mood—
"I dare not, waiting on I would;"
A slumbering fire in his soul,
Long curbed by manly self-control,
Burst, at the sound of Ethel's name,
Into a brighter, fiercer flame.
The fortunes such as most men prize
Were but as ashes in his eyes,
When weighed beside this floral token,
Perfumed with meaning all unspoken;

And backward now his memory went,
  And with excitement, scanned anew
The letter that his friend had sent,
  Whose words he scarce believed were true.
Your name (thus did the letter speak),
Flushed with new life her saddened cheek.
Now Conrad's trembling, shy reserve,
That deadened heart and brain and nerve,
To hope and confidence was turned,
And all its fetters proudly spurned.

Scene IV.

Under a Cliff by the Ocean.

I

[*Conrad alone.*

SOFT winds, that wandered in thick-coming dusk,
Sang low, faint lullabies. Out in the West
There was a fading sunset; cities built
Of many-storied clouds had lately been
In conflagration, and such graceful shapes
Were fierce with flame as sculptured Rome had not,
When Nero's fires swept her queenly hills.
Now ashen paleness hazed the ruined West,
With here and there a jet of sunset flame
Still shooting through the rifted, crumbling walls,
And darting from the toppling pinnacles
Of that wrecked gorgeousness.

II

Far out at sea
Two silent ships, with rigging taut and trim,

Were sailing, and the dying light of day
Struck their bleached wings and whitened them
still more
Against the thickening darkness of the sky;
Companion vessels did they seem to be.
Intently Conrad watched their fading forms,
Until beyond the veiled horizon one
Sank out of sight; the other sailed alone.
He held a portrait to his widowed lips,
And thought how like his sister's vanished life
Was that now sightless ship.

He saw the night
Set one bright star upon her dusky brow,
And when she put her myriad jewels on,
These seemed to borrow all their silver beams
From this queen beauty reigning in the sky.
Unconsciously he said, "An emblem this
Of her who shone with earth's divinest light."

Long time he sat beneath the jutting cliff,
And, chasing memories and tangled dreams,

Was like the tenant of a far-off world,
Now lost and sighing for his native home.
And then in low, pathetic voice, he broke
The hush of soul.

III

[*Conrad soliloquizing.*

Be still, my busy heart,
In this calm hour, and listen to thyself.

I seemed to have two selves in one, and all
My childish thoughts and joys were shared,
And in the sharing all were doubled, too.
Twin selves we were, in mystic union fused,
And what I called myself included her.
One spark of being lit two infant forms—
Two hearts, yet beating with one pulse of life,
Two natures strangely joined in holy birth,
And each so generous with artless love
That to the other did it give its all.

We grew as double blossoms on the vine
Unfold their tender leaves, yet by one stem

Are held in unity. There side by side,
Tucked in the little cot, we seemed to draw
One breath, and, in our startled dreams and cries,
The mother's touch that stilled the sobs of one
Was gentle lullaby and peace to both.
Urged by one vital impulse did we grow,
And bonny childhood was the same to each.

We lived in an old country mansion where
Ancestral portraits, faded and forlorn,
Stiff with high collars and with visage stern,
Hung on the walls and looked reproachfully
At this new generation of their kin.
Could they have come to life I would have fled
As from strange beings of another race.
One portrait only in the prim and silent group
Had any charms for my young heart and eyes:
That of a child it was, and when they told
Me that an angel brought her down to earth,
I fancied that upon her dimpled cheeks
She kept the snowy fairness of the face
That had been fondly pressed against her own.
So full of meaning were her soft, dark eyes,

Her parted lips, and even wayward hair,
That with a voice she did not need to speak.

Some world was sad without her pretty smile,
And, moaning, sent to have her quickly come.
I wondered if she had not now returned
To be my twin companion and my joy,
Restored with added gentleness and grace
In that bright form my little sister wore.
Was this the fancy of a wondering child?
Perhaps it was, but even now it clings to me,
And I have not outgrown it.

Wooded hills
Beyond our homestead, billowed far away,
And all the ruffled earth was beautiful.
There nature drew deep breath, threw wide her arms,
Rebelled against the tight-laced, stifled life
Within the packed and artificial town,
Uncaged her birds, and summer mornings dawned
With feathered escorts, chirping merry songs.

Each spring a pair of happy robins came,
Hopped briskly round the door, and were so tame,
So ready for familiar interchange,
That in the sacred circle of the home
They seemed to hold a place and form a part.
One was my sister's, one my own, and yet
We could not tell our little friends apart,
And mine was hers, and hers was also mine.

Broad fields spread round the shade-embowered house,
And touched the hills, plumed with the waving woods.
Here was our childhood's continent, and we
Explored its wondrous realms and mysteries,
As that bold Genoese, with his frail ships,
Pushed out from Palos on the sunny seas
To find the Indies, or as travelers
Searched for the sources of old Egypt's Nile.
What rare discoveries we made!

Down lanes,
Up verdant slopes, deep in the shadowed glens,

Through tangled meadows, and the pastures flecked
With bleating flocks—world new and picturesque—
We roved with curious eyes and beating hearts.

Bride of the sun was this fair realm of ours,
And all the season through he gave her flowers—
The shy arbutus, spring's first floral child;
Pale blue-bells, ringing chimes that spirits hear;
Bright buttercups and timid violets;
Young lilies of the valley, whose white blooms
Were born of light that ne'er begets a stain;
And daisies, that we called the stars of day.
Snarled vines of honeysuckle, blossoming,
Locked arms in love with the lithe clematis,
And breathed such odors as were fit incense
For morn to mingle with her grateful prayers.
Rocks had their mosses, and the cowslips grew
In marshes low, while dear forget-me-nots
Put on their brightest tints of blue. I loved
All beauty that my sister loved.

We used
To wander through the fields and clustering brakes,
Startled the green vales with our merriment,
Watched the spry squirrels—the little athletes
Of the woods—spied the nest of Jenny Wren,
Fondled the fawns that licked our sun-browned hands,
Made calls upon the flowers, and always found
Them dressed, expectant of our coming. Down
Through the meadows, deepening into a glen,
There ran a brook with banks of tender turf,
On which we romped, or sat through sunny hours,
And wove wild roses into pretty wreaths,
Each putting one upon the other's head,
While, rippling on its way, the cool brook played
Smooth, limpid melodies upon its harp
Of pebbles. Oft two little pairs of feet
Splashed in the water—never one alone.
The glen was sad and silent till we came;
Then 'twas a woodland Babel, and the shouts
We flung against its sides would echo back,
Run riot through the winding curves and dells,

Until we could not tell which voice gave forth
The sound; and if we climbed to see which one
Would scale the cliffs and first would gain the top,
Both reached the brush-capped summit side by
side.

Then came the season of the golden-rod;
Armfuls we gathered of its yellow plumes,
And when in mimic strife each claimed the more,
We found both little harvests just alike.

Unfolding years brought but a common lot,
And neither books, nor thoughts, nor hopes, nor
fears,
Were mine except as they were shared by her.
She was my other self—twin soul—and held
My being in her own, as I held hers
In mine, and only in the outward form
Were we divided. Thus each year we grew
As from a common root, and not one bud
Of promise, or one tender prophecy,
Foretold the morrow's richer wealth of life
Save as the coming fruit appeared in each.

Once did her merry laugh grow strangely still,
And burning fever kindled its red fires
Upon her cheeks, and in unrest and dreams
She tossed like a faint swimmer on the sea.
I would have cured her with sweet violets,
And, had they healing power, I cast enough
Upon her panting breast to smother all
The feverish flames. O how it pained my heart
That hers was now so stifled and so dead!

I heard a sigh for her in every wind,
Heard plaintive song-birds calling her to come,
Heard sadness in the brook's low melody,
And saw the outward world conceal its face
In night to weep its dewy tears for her.

When in her budding girlhood argosies
Of love in lavish bounty at her feet
Were cast, and suitors, though of princely type,
Sued for a glance from those soul-lighted eyes,
I almost thought them lawless tresspassers,
As one might fear a stealthy, dastard thief
Would rob him of his jewels and his gold.

Peace made a dove-cot of our happy home;
We breathed alike affection's balmy air,
And one great love cradled our growing life,
Parental fondness taking naught from one
To press upon the other's waiting lips
A warmer kiss. And all the nursing years
Served but to quicken and give greater strength
To that dear oneness, born when we were born.

And now had one and twenty summers passed,
Each bringing added beauty to my world—
For she was my bright world—when like the bolt
That rives in twain the helpless oak, there fell
The awful blow that sundered us apart.
O earth, so blank! O heaven, dark as death!
O universe, one vast and frigid tomb!
My spirit, stunned and with black blindness struck,
Groped where a world of life and beauty bloomed,
Where life in heaven throbbed with pulse of stars,
And found dead lands, dead seas, dead orbs, one great
Sepulchral, universal death!

And then
With strange, wild questionings I asked if I
Were also dead, so staggering was the thought
That I could be and live while she was not.

IV

[*Conrad slowly repeats.*

Is Constance Among the Stars?

Yon giant suns—the lambent dust thick sown
In soundless space—burn their eternal lights,
As if our dying world heaved ne'er a groan,
Nor sobbed, heart-broken, through its weary nights.

Did waking stars break silence in the morn
That flung its beauty o'er the infant earth?
Sing, did they, when our baby world was born?
Alas, since then they must have mourned the birth.

The light that flashes in a maiden's eyes,
Enkindled by the soul that thinks and feels,

Is more than distant beauty in the skies,
More than the flame the Southern Cross reveals.

The maiden's eyes grow blank and stark in death;
Young glory fades as falls the frosted rose;
Now, songful stars, ye hold your startled breath,
And mutely wonder at her dread repose.

Does she, whose grave you watch from eve to morn,
Now make her home among celestial spheres?
From arms that belted her now rudely torn,
Finds she an orb unused to pangs and tears?

There let her dwell in knowledge, light and love—
This one whose dying darkened all my life—
While brighter shines the Pleiad from above,
That gave her welcome from the world's great strife.

Dear star, if sinking with the weight of time,
Thy flame should flicker and thy pace should tire,
Her presence would renew thy brilliant prime,
And light again thy dim and waning fire.

Fair Hesperus, that charms the darkened West,
Shines somewhere though it fade from human view;
She lived her day, sank into dreamless rest,
And in her lovely dying lived anew.

For her 'twas well—so says my poor, starved heart,
Though dead the sun that bloomed my roseate bower;
'Twas touch divine that made the life-strings part,
And Heaven's clock had struck her natal hour.

Stars cannot fade until their race is run;
Such faith to changeless destiny I give;
Nor can I die until my work is done,
And after that I do not care to live.

Scene V.

A Balcony by the Sea.

I

[*Conrad and Gordon.*

GORDON.

WHAT news from the mountains, Conrad? In reply
To my letter you said this and that, told the *why*
And the *how* and the *wherefore* of much that has passed
Since the night, you remember, when I saw you last.
Miss Ethel—what of her? Give news down to date;
Has she, or another, decided your fate?
Of her you said nothing—suspicious that looks;
You talked of boats, bathing, of belles and of books,
Of a fair one you met—was it Gladys? Was that

Her sweet name? I refer to the lady who sat
In the light of your eyes on the bow of the boat—
And yet not a word of Miss Ethel you wrote.

CONRAD.

Why ask me? Why think for a moment I could
Bear away such a treasure if even I would?
You said that my name brought a flush to her face,
And imagined I held in her heart the first place.
You do me an honor I never have claimed;
What fortune, what title, what else could be named,
That might not be hers for one wave of her hand?
More queenly than queens thus all hearts to command!
Do you not quite mistake? Can it be I'm the knight,
A sight of whose plume she awaits with delight?
Prithee, Gordon, explain.

GORDON.

I have guessed. That is all;
Guessed enough, I am sure, all your doubts to forestall,
Guessed by actions, not words, for her words were as shy
As are quails in the meadows when gunners are nigh.
Hard to read is a heart—this I know very well—
The more the heart feels, oft the less it will tell;
A weak, shallow soul is the one that will babble,
And the emptier 'tis, why, the more it will gabble;
Let me hearken to voices that utter no sound,
Be enraptured by silence, and listen, spellbound.

CONRAD.

Quite right, my dear fellow, and wise thus to speak;
A man may read Hebrew and Sanskrit and Greek,
Hieroglyphics of Egypt and letters in rock,
Carved there by old Time on the hard stony block,

Yet to be a mind-reader would be something more;
Miraculous insight 'twould take to explore
The heights and abysses in one human breast,
Where passions burn ever and thoughts never rest.
So you guessed it, my friend?

GORDON.

Yes, and am I not right?
And right, too, in this—tell me now, "honor bright"—
It needs but a word from those blossoming lips,
Where the gods might well pause, as the honey-bee sips
The fresh nectars of June, to entrance your whole being?

CONRAD.

Would not you, too, be crazed?

GORDON.

Yes, I own, that by seeing
One smile on her face that was meant just for me,
The bells of my heart would ring wild jubilee.

CONRAD.

So I thought, but an impassioned enthusiast—
For with such, my good fellow, you'll have to be classed—
Should be able to find some most angelic creature,
So brilliant in mind and so charming in feature,
That others would seem to be but commonplace,
Weak, wearying, stupid, and ugly in face,
In short, dismal failures, when placed beside her.

GORDON.

That's encouraging, Conrad, but I must demur
To the notion that, having once seen Ethel's charms,
You or I could jump headlong right into the arms
Of some other enchanter. "See Venice and die"—
You know the old saying. The words would imply
What I'm trying just now to express.

CONRAD.

But suppose
The ardor you fancy in her bosom glows,
Should have for its object some one besides me—
A thing you'll admit that might easily be—
Would you have me make love only just to be jilted—
A suitor repulsed and crestfallen and wilted?

GORDON.

I see you want Ethel to make the advances,
And tell you beforehand you're taking no chances—
The wooing, please skip, for there needs to be none,
Since she's made up her mind that she's already won,
That, being well settled and furnished with money,
She'll propose that you join her in sweet matrimony,
And having obtained your consent and papa's,
In which would of course be included mamma's,
Having fixed on the day, having sent invitations

To uncles and aunts, and more distant relations,
Having purchased the ring and the parson secured,
She will send round a carriage and—

CONRAD.

No, be assured
I would think I was slighted and would much prefer
She should not marry me unless I married her.
Two halves in a unit, and one half not there?
Such a unit as that were in need of repair.
I only mean this: if in torrid emotion
I should sing a night song to express my devotion,
Voice a low serenade on the soft summer air,
To some angelic charmer, some goddess so fair,
Quite provoking at least I am sure it would prove,
To find that the tremulous song of my love
Had been sung to a blank, empty window.

Away
Where the mild airs of Italy breathe, and the day,

Praised by poets, hangs long in the violet sky,
Unwilling to part with its beauty and die,
Yet takes on a charm as it melts into night,
Even fairer than graced its meridian light—
That land of the lute and the song and the dance,
A land of old story and ardent romance—
I once heard a lover at night as he sang,
Heard his amorous notes and the rich mellow twang
Of his sweet mandolin.

GORDON.

Well, what of it, pray tell?
What happened? What fortune or ill luck befell
This amorous youth? And what has it to do
With the tender affair between Ethel and you?
Did he faint—get a chill—get a bucket of water?
Did the father waylay him for loving his daughter?

CONRAD.

Hear my story, and then you will readily see
Why I wish his droll blunder averted from me.

A scene soon occurred that was quite unromantic,
For within was another fond lover, and, frantic
With rage, and with fear lest the brave serenader
Should rob the dark belle of the vows he had paid her,
Rushed out at the singer, and calling, "Police!"
Had him straightway locked up for disturbing the peace.
His voice was refined and he sang very well,
Though I doubt if he sang a love song in his cell.
You may say I am timid, but pardon my fear,
For when under the window I chance to appear,
I prefer the assurance without any doubt,
That the fair one I seek is within, and not out,
That no other is thrilled by a smile from her face,
Or, enraptured, is locked in her tender embrace.
I would aim for a conquest, and so too would you,
I would want an empire and not Waterloo.

II

GORDON.

Excuse me, you dropped from the book in your hand

Something over the balcony, down on the sand;
A keepsake? What was it? Don't blush so, my friend;
Any secret about it? My service I'll lend
To obtain it.

CONRAD.

No, no, I will just step below,
And will get what I wish not to lose. You shall know
What it is.

GORDON.

'Tis a flower, I see.

CONRAD.

That is all;
In this book it was pressed and it happened to fall
As I opened the leaves.

GORDON.

I disclaim all intent
To be any occasion of embarrassment;

Whatever the meaning—for that I'll not seek,
Yet perhaps if these red floral lips were to speak,
And would frankly make known what they have to impart,
They would tell a life tale of some poor stricken heart.

CONRAD.

Just a friend's pleasant gift that grew wild in the dell—
What story of fate do you think it could tell?
Nothing more than a trifling remembrance, a token
Of innocent greeting and friendship unbroken.
Did I answer it? Yes, from the gardens that grow
Where above them the wide-sweeping tides ebb and flow—
Sent an answer from bowers that bloom in the sea,
And rival the beauty of mountain and lea.
'Twas a sea-weed of cunning and exquisite grace,
And draped with rich fringes of delicate lace,

Such as Nymphs, in the depths 'neath the billows' commotion,
Knit deftly and hang in the arbors of ocean.

III

GORDON.

You are fortunate, Conrad, in being so near
The wide sandy shore. You are where you can hear
What the surge has to say, what the crowds on the beach
Express in the flow of their gossiping speech.
I'm attracted by that group of belles there below—
Are there any among those bright faces you know?
Now their eyes are this way—they would gain your attention—
And now they salute you.

CONRAD.

There's one I may mention,
In fact, I have named her already

GORDON.

You mean
That I'm looking at Gladys, the radiant queen,
The lady you named in your letter to me,
Nothing less, you declared, than a "discovery?"
A term very rare, you'll agree, on reflection,
If one were to seek it in such a connection.
Discoveries cover a wide range of topics—
Old cities long buried, strange lands in the Tropics,
Queer people where Africa's great rivers roll,
And icebergs some distance this side the North Pole.
The Cartoons of Raphael, hidden so long,
At last were discovered. I see I am wrong—
Excuse me—a blunder, no doubt, on my part,
To suggest you discovered a choice work of art,
Yet such, I conclude, from quite common report,
Have been found before now at a summer resort.
Discoveries many and startling there are—
Stars, comets, gold mines, jewels brilliant and rare—
Discoveries claiming to be scientific,
Of which our bright age is extremely prolific,

Yet, Conrad, it seems to have been left to you
To discover a woman.

CONRAD.

Perhaps that is true.
Yes, a woman, and granting she fills that great word,
Can the use of my term be considered absurd?
You see her below, hear her voice through the din
Of the bold, forward waves as they come rolling in;
'Tis the one with brown hair and a cheek like the peach,
As with grace of a Venus she stands on the beach.

GORDON.

Ah, I see, she is all you have pictured. I own
Your description was true, and that you're not alone
In your rapt admiration. I share it, my friend.
Yes, I see her. Believe me, I frankly extend
My warmest congratulations. Such as she—
I confess it—may rank as a discovery.

CONRAD.

What now? Why so silent? She strikes you quite dumb.

GORDON.

What is she—a vision? My spirit is numb.
She's the image—O Heaven!—But stop, I will hush
The tumultuous thoughts and emotions that rush
Through my soul as I gaze at her fair, open face.
Have you studied it closely, and can you there trace
The charm of another? I'll not try to tell
What it is—yet I'm bound by a singular spell.

CONRAD.

Be assured I have eyes quite as good as your own,
And a heart, too, I have that is not frigid stone;
I am moved by that face; there's a pathos about it
That lures me and saddens me too; can you doubt it?

Scene VI.

A Mountain Glen.

I

DAY fading in umbrageous night—
Two lovers in the mild twilight:
Brook gayly chattering along—
Two lovers heedless of its song:
Wildwood below and rocks above—
Two lovers whispering their love:
Stars waking in the mystic sky—
Two lovers mingling sigh with sigh:
Two beating hearts, yet only one—
World dead and gone and heaven begun!

II

Conrad was manly, tender, brave,
And not like Antony, a slave
To woman's beauty. Yet much less,
With brazen front and haughtiness,

Could he, unfeeling, act the part
Augustus played with stony heart,
Turn rudely from love's waiting arms,
And freeze a Cleopatra's charms.

Full confidence each lover felt,
And each to each in worship knelt,
Talked of the glen and mountain flower,
The crimson weed from ocean's bower—
Each a fair child of God's creation,
A messenger, a revelation—
Talked of reserve that, shy and cold,
Froze passion pining to be told—
Talked of the wondrous law or fate
By which the birdling finds its mate—
Read thoughts, each in the other's eyes,
Outshining jewels in the skies,
And blessed divine, benignant powers
For those enrapturing, roseate hours.

Now came the moon, night's lustrous eye,
And, from its watchtower in the sky,

Glared at the mountain crags, and then
Peered through the secrets of the glen,
Shot furtive glances at the brook,
Searched out each coy, retiring nook,
Blinked at the plumes of martial trees,
Peeped 'neath the mantles of their leaves—
An orb more eagle-eyed and bright
Than e'er before had graced the night.

Blank would creation all have been,
  Disrobed and stark and strangely cold,
No eye of night in heaven seen,
  Earth turned to grave of sickening mold.
No birth of day, no summer green,
  The scroll of heaven together rolled,
Save for two hearts bound by the spell
Of passion breathed within the dell.
Too swiftly climbed the eager moon,
The perfumed hours fled too soon,
While thoughts and words together strove,
  And panting silence did its part,
To tell the old, old tale of love,
  And ease sweet agony of heart.

One final, holy, mute embrace—
And Ethel upward turned her face:
There let the light a moment dwell!
Come now some Titian, Raphael,
With touch of miracle to catch
The tears that rush in burning streams,
The newborn, throbbing life to snatch,
The heaven that in her visage gleams,
And paint the picture!—Yet why ask
E'en genius to achieve such task,
To sketch the transport and express
Ideal woman's loveliness,
Which Greece, with glow of rapturous pride,
In marble would have deified?

III

Conrad was conqueror and king.
A conquest did that hour bring,
Which once his wildest, fondest dream
Had mocked with pangs of rending pain.
O conquest real! Yet did he seem
As one once born, now born again,
And born in fashion new and strange,

Thrust blindly far beyond the range
Of that smooth path, unvexed and clear,
His feet had traveled year by year.
Would manly shame, would keen regret
E'er tempt his honor to forget?
'Twas conquest, ever loved by man,
Sought, prized, pursued since time began;
No power so prized as that, I ween,
Which wins an Ethel for its queen.
He slept on roses. Slept?—Too deep
His inflamed soul was stirred for sleep.
'Twas love's sweet trance, or if you will,
It was a craze, a nameless thrill
That through his spellbound being ran,
And told he was not less than man.

And Ethel's conquest?—'Twas one more
To swell the number gone before—
Made not by smirks or sly flirtation,
Nor by designing calculation—
Nor murderous kiss that gives a smack,
And stabs its victim in the back—
Made not by base hypocrisy,

To win 'mong aristocracy
A place. Nor made with words of honey,
To rob a sapling of his money,
Bestowing kisses in amount
According to his bank account.
Nor did she, with Damascus steel,
And heart too hard to wince or feel,
Tap suitors as a surgeon would,
And coolly draw their warm, red blood,
To try its quality, and see
If 'twere of high or low degree.

Some called her that, and others, this—
"A taking girl," "a lovely miss"—
"Heart-breaker," "charmer," "city belle"—
Whose all-entrancing, magic spell
Could be unfelt, repulsed by no man:
Yet more than all was she a woman.

"Six bouquets on her table"—meant
For something more than compliment,
Yet no devotion, no appeal
Could win a smile she did not feel.

Some men are men, and some are less;
Her's was ambition to possess
What rounds the fulness of God's plan,
Not the mere fraction of a man—
Not something in male garments dressed,
Done up in hat and coat and vest,
Whose sexed apparel one must scan
Before concluding it's a man—
Not one whose being is a question,
A merely masculine suggestion,
A growth just outlined and intended,
And then by sudden mildew ended.

She spurned the sapling's scanty browse,
And sat beneath the cedar's boughs.
Thus did the classic Helena,
Whose sceptred beauty stretched its sway
O'er Grecian chiefs that sighed and strove
To win this daughter of great Jove,
Turn from their amorous addresses,
Reserving all her warm caresses
For Menelaüs, who alone
Could make her heart his matchless throne.

IV

Swift passed the moments, swift each hour
Which dated from that twilight bower,
That night, of all the nights supreme,
When God in heaven with the gleam
Of moon-lit eye, witnessed between
Two lovers in the hushed ravine.

For weeks before, as when one vine
Creeps toward another to entwine
The tendrils pining for embrace,
Their fond attentions grew apace—
The signs far off, yet coming nearer,
The half-hid words becoming clearer,
The rambles by the summer brooks,
The mutual interest in books,
The blushes, not quite doubtful now,
The whisperings so long and low,
The sidelong glances, gleams of eyes—
Those wings with which sly Cupid flies—
The floral gifts, hand laid in hand,
With touch that each could understand,
Until, lips amorously pressed,
'Tis easy to divine the rest!

Thus, slowly in its sun-warmed bower
Unfolds the star-like passion-flower—
The struggling seed panting for birth,
The eager life now bursting forth,
The tender stem, timid and frail,
Low bending in the wooing gale,
The inner force that cannot rest,
By growth and loveliness expressed,
The bud, hid in its leafy tomb,
Awaiting resurrection bloom,
All parts perfected, one by one,
By gentle process of the sun,
Until, as dawns its natal hour,
Behold, the full-blown, sacred flower!
What else that in life's garden grows
Has such a blossom to disclose?

V

Ethel's Song of Love.

I love, and my heart that was dying,
Scarce gasping a tremulous breath,
To song turns its sorrowful sighing,
And ceases its moanings for death;

O worlds! hear my jubilant singing—
Notes keyed to the coo of the dove—
Notes keyed to the clarion, ringing—
O worlds, 'tis the music of love!

I love, and the phantoms are fleeing,
That maddened my sensitive brain;
A thrill strikes the nerves of my being—
The rapture is almost a pain;
Life rushes like rivers around me,
Life beats me as storms lash the sea,
But, love, thou hast sought and hast found me,
I die—yet I live unto thee!

O love, I hear melodies stealing
From woodlands and meadows and dells,
As if the glad angels were pealing
Soft chimes from invisible bells;
A mystical harp thou art thrumming,
Whose strings are the sun's mellow beams—
I list to the sweet, tender humming,
Aud hear it again in my dreams.

O love, my hot brow thou art wreathing
With blossoms pearl dews have caressed;
With affluent joy thou art breathing
New life through my perishing breast;
Now, hues of the May-trees are whiter,
And deeper the blush of the dawn,
The far constellations are brighter,
The wail of the night winds is gone.

Hush, hush! Through the shadows that hover
Around me this star-lighted night,
I catch the footfall of my lover—
Two beings in one now unite;
He comes with the glow of the morning,
He comes with the breath of the spring;
Too cheap were such tawdry adorning
As graces the head of a king.

O lover, to me thou art bringing
The gems of earth's opulent zones,

And down at my feet thou art flinging
Far more than the splendor of thrones!
Poor, poor was my spirit and dying,
Till thou to my bosom didst fly,
Now, angels as well might be sighing,
And pant in their heaven to die.

My singers are brooks in the brambles,
Hot deserts break into fresh bloom;
To me, in my glad, summer rambles,
The pine waves its emerald plume;
My lover, the lily was mourning,
Its blossoms were weeds of dark woe,
You loved me, and on that dear morning
The lily was dressed like the snow.

Wild passions breed tempests within me,
My spirit is torn with mad pain;
Speak, lover!—one whisper can win me
To peace and to laughter again;
My sobs are now changed to a pean,
And fury is stilled in my breast,

As when the Divine Galilean
Soothed tempest and billows to rest.

Dark, dark, O my lover, is midnight,
I tremble and shiver with dread,
I catch not a ray of the starlight,
I'm cold as the graves of the dead;
Lo! now to thy warm bosom turning,
A spark flashes out from thine eyes,
And glories of midday are burning,
Though suns nevermore should arise.

Supreme is this calm evening hour,
The sleeping day rests from its throes,
Yet here, in this rose-scented bower,
My unsleeping soul overflows;
Thy fingers creep through my snarled tresses,
My tears fall like wind-driven rain,
And, crazed by these ardent caresses,
Wild blood rushes through ev'ry vein.

I'm dumb—yet consumed with desire
My vehement passion to speak,

My blushes are sunsets of fire
That burn on my amorous cheek;
'Tis night, but the blush is not hidden,
I'm dumb and enchained by love's spell,
Yet heart-throbs and sobbings unbidden
Reveal what my lips cannot tell.

Thy heart, O my lover, is beating—
Quick rhythms 'tis making with mine,
Our lips, in wild ecstacy meeting,
Dissolve my whole being in thine;
If I could absorb all the living,
All hearts and miraculous charms,
This infinite one to thee giving,
Quick, quick, I would leap to thine arms!

Scene VII.

The Midnight Phantom.

I

STILL lingered the summer among the White Mountains,
Still in the deep dales sang the cool, purling fountains,
The morning mists muffled the slumbering valleys,
The lazy clouds moved as if slaves in the galleys,
The noon, faint and languid, hot blood in its veins,
Crept up the hilltops from the low-lying plains,
And infrequently evening, with affluent showers,
Washed the robes of the woodlands and freshened their bowers.

II

A promise to Ethel by Gladys was made,
That a visit arranged for should not be delayed

Until Conrad his summer vacation had ended.
The time was now nearing when he had intended
To recommence work in the city. And yet
The bare thought was a sadness, a pang of regret,
For reasons not difficult surely to guess.
The city just now?—'Twere a blank wilderness,
A desert unpeopled, no charm and no cheer,
A Sahara of solitude, dismal and drear,
For Ethel would linger among the green dells,
And the radiant presence that ever dispels
The plaint from a love-kindled, desolate heart,
Would be absent. What magic, what reason, what art
Could render existence worth bearing a day,
With Ethel, beloved and adored, far away?

Awhile would she breathe the cool uplands' fresh air,
Make friends with the strength of the hills, and repair
The waste that is levied by even our bliss—
The tax that emotion can never dismiss—

The reaction of feeling, though happy it be,
That excites and ferments us as storms toss the sea,
Pales the cheeks, rasps the nerves and susceptible brain,
Brings rapture supreme and yet with it a pain.

On Ethel's rapt face was a far-away look,
A sombre expression that strangers mistook
For the gnawing of grief or unsatisfied pining,
As if, with hopes dying, she now were resigning
The world to its fate, and herself to her own,
Like a heart that is widowed and sorrows alone.
But no! She had grasped a whole world, and now deep
Was the look on her face, and serene as the sleep
Of the calm, azure sky on a triumphant day,
O'er whose sacred composure no giddy clouds play.
Yet—to finish the figure—thoughts burned in her soul,
As, unseen in the azure, the flaming suns roll.

III

Gladys came—'twas a song from the billowy sea—
'Twas a sweet, fragrant breath from the redolent lea—
Her step was the skip of the blithesome young bird,
A melody warbled in each spoken word,
And in her deep eyes with their swift-darting glances,
Lurked histories, written, and ardent romances.

Brown summer, with pencil and delicate brush,
Had toned down and darkened the soft crimson flush
On her beaming, young face. Yet fresh health gave a glow
That a veiled, hothouse loveliness cannot bestow;
A child did she seem of the turf and the air,
Who had been through her years both the pet and the care
Of nature, unfolding with influence kind,
Impulses of feeling and beauty of mind.

Her school-days were over, yet did she discern
She had just reached the point of beginning to learn.

Like Ethel, a womanly woman was she,
As bright, frank and winsome as any you'd see
In the bounds of a kingdom. Though not so far-famed
For her beauty as Ethel—not frequently named,
Like her friend, as the goddess whom all men adored,
Yet from her rich chalice sweet nectars she poured,
And was clothed with a strength, an omnipotent charm,
A nature refined and a heart that was warm,
Which, united, compelled admiration and love.
Her manner was artless—a bearing above
The low tricks that coquettes know so well how to play
In enslaving sir knights to their magical sway.

IV

Met by Ethel and Conrad that night at the station,
Gladys frankly extended her congratulation,
And expressed in each look, in each generous word,
Unaffected delight at the news she had heard—
The news that the seaweed from ocean's cool bower
Was laid, face to face, with the sweet mountain flower—
A very dear confidence eagerly scanned
In a letter received from Miss Ethel's own hand.

There was talk at the shore. Little birds had been flying,
And rumors that no one had cause for denying,
In hotels and elsewhere had been floating about,
Which, interpreted, meant that without any doubt
Conrad had a purpose in leaving the shore,
Had vanished for good, to be seen there no more,
And that by no motives would he be constrained

To return while a lady named Ethel remained
In the mountains.

Surprising it was, 'twas too bad,
'Twas unthought of, 'twas pitiful, really quite sad,
That so noble a youth, a young man so admired,
With the name and accomplishments he had acquired,
Should so far forget himself, jeopard his fate,
And form an alliance—alas, when too late
To retrieve his mistake—by bestowing his heart
On a lady who surely could never impart,
By mere personal charms, the deep soul-satisfaction
A nature like his would demand. Such attraction
Would soon melt away, like the flickering star
That, kindling its light in the heavens afar,
Gleams out for a moment, and then behind clouds
Is lost in the gloom which its beauty enshrouds.
Yes, so cold, unimpressible Conrad had seemed,

That of such blatant folly no one would have dreamed.

So thought Mrs. A.—who, of course, was a mother,
So thought Mrs. B.—who, of course, was another—
An opinion endorsed by the wise Mrs. C.,
And fully concurred in by wise Mrs. D.—
Expressing exactly the thought of Miss E.,
And exactly the thought of the rest, down to Z—
While the men, as men would, were all wondering why
Any tart busybodies should wish to deny
The privilege vested in whoever would,
Of entrancing a beautiful girl, if he could.

Such flat disagreements will happen again,
Since men are not women, and women not men.

'Twas the same old mistake, very commonly made,

Of supposing that weakness of soul must be laid
At the door of a woman whom nature has graced
With the rich charms of person, so easily traced
In action and feature, in manners and mould,
As if it were nature's dark plan to withhold
From such favored creatures a more golden worth—
The beauty of soul, the divinest on earth—
And as if it must chance that the fairest are vainest,
And none can be good save the leanest and plainest;
And further, as if no vain pride lurks in those
Who wear very plain faces and very plain clothes!

V

Gladys sat with her friends through long hours that night,
And with voluble speech, entertaining and bright,
Provoking quick smiles and exuberant glee,
Related the happenings down by the sea.

At intervals Conrad bent on her his eyes
With an interest such as he could not disguise,
Sat silent and thoughtful before that fond face,
Whose shifting expressions all left a deep trace
On his own inner being.

He very well knew
What charm fixed his vision, what magic spell drew
The flood-tides of emotion within his warm breast,
As ocean responds to the queenly behest
Of that empress, the moon, who but speaks her command,
And the uprising sea rushes wild on the strand.

VI

The hotel had extinguished its lights, and the clock
Told that soon would the dawn with her pale fingers knock
At the gates of the night. Conrad lingered alone

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With Ethel awhile after Gladys had gone
To her coveted rest. Ethel tenderly took
His hand in her own, and with deep-meaning look
Breathed her thoughts to his heart.

"More than ever,"
she said,
"Does Gladys bring back from the still-living dead
The image of her you have lost. In her form,
Her expression, her features, her manner, her warm
Eager impulse, in short, in a thousand fond ways,
That riveted on her my wondering gaze,
She reproduced Constance."

There came no reply,
Except as a blossoming tear and a sigh
Told, as only the sigh and the warm tear could tell,
That, wrapped in one Conrad, another might dwell.

It was plain that the soul within soul was now moved,
By as much as he grieved and remembered and loved.

"I feel with you, Ethel," at length he replied,
"That Constance has never before, since she died,
Seemed so real and so near. O believe me, all, all,
That renews her sweet life and can serve to recall
Her immaculate image, half crazes my brain,
Brings a heaven of transport, yet smites me with pain!
Sitting here by your side in this holy communion,
I yet feel the spell of a blissful reunion
With her who was born as a part of my birth.
Can it be that she still is a tenant of earth?
How strange do I seem to myself—yes, I seem
More and more to be lost in a shadowy dream,
Yet a dream that is not a thin dream, but is more,
Vastly more than the life that I realized before.
Since I met this bright image of her I adored,
I can almost imagine the lost is restored.

Do not chide me—O no!—though I speak as I do,
Since I echo the thoughts that were uttered by you."

There was silence a moment. The low-breathing sigh
Of winds cooled by the mountains and wandering by,
Floated in at the window. The hush of the night
Was a voiceless magician, ordained to incite
All the hopes and the fears that take refuge and brood
In the unexplored realms of the heart's solitude.

Not all had been spoken, and that which remained
Was unuttered, as if by some power restrained,
Conrad's lips were benumbed and grown suddenly dumb
With a silence his will could not then overcome.

Ethel whispered, "How dear and how precious
the gift
Of a friend whose bright presence your spirit can
lift
To the happy beyond!"

"That is like you," he said,
"From whose heart every selfish desire has fled."

"I wish that were true as you think it, Conrad,
But whatever is yours that can make your heart
glad—
This I know, and 'tis only the truth to declare—
In that deep, holy joy do I honestly share."

"Tell me, Ethel, as you have known Gladys
for years,
Has she been to your vision as now she appears,
So like unto Constance?"

"Yes, always she's been
What before, and to-night, you, enchanted, have
seen.

A thousand have marked it ere this. I've a letter,
Received from a friend, that expresses it better
Than words of my own. Her choice language conveys
The idea that the charms such as Gladys displays
Fell to only two mortals, which gifts were so rare
That all others were barred from obtaining a share.
'Tis a pretty conceit—let us say it is true."

"Tell me, Ethel, still further, if ever by you
Was discovered that oneness, that strange unity,
Of which I was conscious, in Constance and me?"

"What else could there be? How could any illusion
Hide twinhood away and prevent its intrusion
On all who had eyes to observe? And I've heard
What certainly no one would fancy absurd,

That sympathy, subtle, resistless in power,
Unites those who date from the same natal hour:
More marked in some cases, perhaps, than in others,
Controlling the lives of both sisters and brothers."

"Say no more, O my Ethel," did Conrad exclaim,
"I know it—I know it! Yet like a fierce flame
Does the thought of it burn in my brain!"

He started
Like one who is crazed. Then with Ethel he parted
In tenderness ardent and lovely. Come, sleep,
Come, vigils of Heaven, and over them keep
Through the hours of silence a watch!

VII

In his breast
Such forces were heaving as troubled the rest

That Conrad, quite wearied, tried hard to obtain,
As he turned on his pillow again and again.
As the swift humming-bird in its wandering flights,
On the wind-shaken vine but a moment alights,
So his sleep came and went, yet no rest did it bring,
And, with little repose, was his brain on the wing.

Then, weird and fantastic, a fluttering dream
On his unquiet slumber arose like the gleam
Of a meteor darting across the black sky—
Now past, though a moment ago it was nigh.
For an instant did Constance, appareled in white,
From the shadows of mystery rise to his sight,
In fashion unearthly and fair as the dawn—
He stretched out his arms, he awaked—she was gone!
It was hard to imagine that only a dream
Had chased through his slumbers, so real did she seem.

VIII

The hotel was astir, and the sun's fervid glow
Gave promise of heat in the valleys below;
The mists, like pale armies rolled back in the fight,
Were swept by the sunbeams and scattered in flight.
Up somewhere—the somewhere all vague, undefined,
The arcanum of nature, to which we are blind—
Electrical signals, unseen here below,
Darted swift, hissed and crackled and whizzed to and fro,
And the sprites that attend on the gods of the air,
And gleefully frisk in the lightning's red glare,
Tossed their plumes as on hurrying errands they flew,
And with trumpet afar through the deep azure blew
The war-cry of the gathering storm.

It was late
Before Conrad could shake from his spirit the weight

Of impressions that saddened and also perplexed
him,
And which, if less sacred, perchance would have
vexed him.

On the shaded veranda, an observatory,
Before which the mountains rose, story on story,
Sat Ethel and Gladys. The mail had arrived,
And such satisfaction as may be derived
From a friend's welcome letter was plainly
expressed
On the bright face of Gladys, who freely con-
fessed
That the missive, of no very weighty import,
Had come from a friend at the seaside resort.
'Twas a letter full long to be called "just a
scrap,"
And carelessly dropping it down in her lap,
There was something about it that served to
attract
The attention of Conrad, the writing in fact,
Which he saw at a glance was from Gordon's
own hand.

With such self-possession as he could command,
He calmed his surprise and turned thoughtful
away,
Lest his looks should a strange agitation betray.
And Gladys, deep blushing, was not slow to
guess
That a secret which she did not wish to confess,
Was suspected at least.

Let this chronicle state
With truthful detail that, succeeding the date
Of the balcony scene, when Gordon's rapt eyes
Saw Constance so plainly revealed in the guise
Of another, his warm admiration burned high,
And regard which his heart was too frank to
deny
Grew strong on acquaintance. And so, day by
day,
While glided the weeks of the summer away,
As a lover he pressed his warm suit.

And why not?
With character faultless, unstained by a blot,

And name and position that made him the peer
Of any crazed suitor from far or from near
Who vied for the favor of Gladys, he learned
That attentions he offered were not wholly spurned.
Stiff and strong was his parentage, hot was his blood,
And his will, more than Conrad's, could not be withstood
Without rousing the lion within him; and then
One man was transformed into many strong men.
'Twas the rush of the storm, of wild elements born,
By which the stunned forest, loud crying, is torn.

By instruction at home and experience gained,
Gladys brought to her aid a reserve that remained
Its own mistress. Not yet by her lips had been spoken
The vow that seals fate and is not to be broken.

IX

Wet with sweat were the robes of the day,
and her feet,
Soiled with wearying travel and blistered with
heat,
Bore her slowly away to her chamber of rest,
Through the drapery folds of the cloud-curtained
West.

Ere the last ray of twilight had silently
flown,
Up the glen wandered Conrad, to be there alone
With his thoughts. 'Twas an hour when deep
seemed to be
The outward world's thinking, and rock, nook
and tree
Were silent and prayerful as saints at the altar,
Whose words, even whispers, in solemn hush
falter,
Too devout to be audibly breathed. On he
strolled,
Little heeding the storm whose swift chariots
rolled

Up the far-distant sky. Then a low-wailing
breeze
Stirred the hot, stifled air and the statue-like
trees,
As one who has fainted revives with a breath,
And suddenly wakes from the semblance of
death.
The slow-rising moon, turning pale with dismay,
Fled with feverish haste and in clouds hid away.

Too late was it now, by the most hurried pace,
To escape from the wooded ravine, and retrace
The path that led round jutting cliffs, along
brinks,
From which even in daylight the lone tourist
shrinks,
And wound in and out among deep-shaded
bowers,
Thrice shrouded with darkness in evening's still
hours.

Overhead was a stir in aërial regions,
Where, attended by trumpets of thunder, the
legions

Of tempest, with all their dark banners unfurled,
In pompous array and prepared to be hurled
Like an avalanche onward, impatiently muttered,
Awaiting the signal. At intervals fluttered
The lightning's fierce glare, and the roll and the rattle,
Like that of great guns, growing hot in the battle,
Shook the hills, as grim Giants in classical fable
Flung at heaven such boulders that it was unable
The shock to withstand and in agony reeled.
Swift fell the mad rain and the batteries pealed;
More rapid, more vivid, more startling the flashes
Blazed round the lone mountains, and huge, haggard gashes
Were cut in the forest as onward the gale,
With fury unbridled and maniac wail
Of a demon, tore through the dark glen.

Conrad stood
A moment in terror while down poured the flood,
Then under a cliff found a partial retreat,

While on pinions of wind, wildly waving and fleet,
The storm, as if pained at the wreck it had made
In valley and pasture, in woodland and glade,
And, eager to flee from the carnage, sped on,
And close upon midnight made haste to be gone.

Paralyzed by the onset and drenched with the rain,
Stood the fast-dripping growths and essayed to regain
Their strength and composure, while, lashed into rage,
Dashed the brook on its banks as a beast in its cage
Beats the bars and is stunned. Then the sob and the sighing
Of winds that, exhausted, were now slowly dying,
Came forth on the night, seeming mournful and dread
As the dirges of spirits lamenting their dead.

On the high, jagged summits, on bold, beetling
crags,
Cloudy robes of the tempest were rent into
rags,
And batteries hot that athwart the field rushed,
Had their blazing guns spiked and their bellow-
ings hushed.

X

Nervous, thoughtful, and there all alone with
the night,
Had Conrad been timid and subject to fright,
'Twould have been an impossible task to discern
The meandering pathway by which to return.
Grown bolder, the moon, her dumb terror now
past,
From her eyrie in heaven her furtive gleams
cast,
And through the torn skirts of the storm fast
retreating,
Sent a look now and then of affectionate greet-
ing.

The tumult was over and stillness now reigned,
Save the sound of the raindrops that quietly drained
From coppice and brake and the wild mountain flower,
Coming forth from the bath of the deluging shower.
As the storm burst in uproar the stars fled from home,
Seeking refuge in darkness, and now from the dome
Of the high empyrean their lamps again swung,
Glinting faintly through branches that, bending low, hung
As if tired and wrenched by the fight with the blast,
Which twisted and tossed them aloft as it passed.

On his way Conrad pressed, and the wild, weird night,
With its pale, spectral thoughts, only served to excite

That world within world which, in storm and unrest,
He carried concealed in his deep-troubled breast.
He came to the rock under which, in the gleam
Of soft eyes, he and Ethel had dreamed their sweet dream.
Though sacred the spot, yet 'twas desolate, cold,
And painfully cheerless with dampness and mould.

He suddenly stopped. Through his frame ran a thrill,
A shudder of terror, that efforts of will
Strove in vain to repress. Gone was power to speak,
Else his parched, pallid lips would have uttered a shriek.
Like a statue he stood for an instant, while blood
In his veins dropped to zero.

XI

Through rifts in the wood
He saw, on the edge of a steep, jutting cliff,

A figure in white, while the wind's every whiff
Shook her garment, long flowing, upon the night air,
And waved her rich wealth of luxuriant hair.
Turned away was her face, which she steadily kept
Toward the edge of the cliff as, slow moving, she crept
Like a spectre along the sharp brink. Plainly bare
Were her feet and her head.

. . . . . .

Conrad gazed with the stare
Of a sphinx. Was she real? Was he wrapped in a dream?
Was she human, or only as flesh did she seem?
Moving slowly along with an uncertain pace,
What brought her by night to this desolate place?
There she walked in the shadows, revealed to his sight,
As with mingled emotions of wonder and fright
He watched her bright form. Would she plunge o'er the brink?

Could he save her?—He paused for a moment
to think.

Then a great wave of feeling swept over his
soul—
"It is Constance!" he thought—and he could
not control
His wild impulse to seize her. He crept to her
side—
"O Constance! Dear Constance!" in frenzy he
cried,
And round her he threw his strong arms. His
embrace
Made her tremble and turn her expressionless
face,
When suddenly beamed the high moon through
a cloud.
"O Constance! My Con—no!" he shouted
aloud—
"It is Gladys!"—Upon her pale face the light fell,
And both stood enchained by a magical spell!

Down she sank at his feet with a low, hollow
moan,

Nerves, muscles and will seeming dead as a stone.
There she lay on the edge of the cliff. Then awaking,
Her strong frame convulsed and in agony shaking,
She threw up her arms with a cry. Conrad gazed
At her maidenly figure as one who is dazed—
As one half believing a soul that had fled
To immortal abodes had returned from the dead.

He lifted her gently—she shook off her swoon—
And in the broad glare of the luminous moon
Saw the face of her friend. Her lost senses returned,
And faintly again on her pallid cheeks burned
The rich, native color they commonly wore,
And which, as he spoke, only deepened the more.

"Wake, Gladys!" he whispered—"'tis Conrad, don't fear—

Are you dying, or sleeping—and how came you
here?"

Quick and deep were her sobs and, faint,
trembling and weak,
She leaned on his breast and attempted to speak.
"Back, back, take me back!" were the words
that she gasped,
As his strong, friendly arm she convulsively
clasped.

"O Gladys," he murmured—"yet am I
deceived?
I saw you—I fancied, yes, almost believed
'Twas a vision of Constance. I seem now to feel
The throb of her heart—O, it makes my brain
reel!"

Through the damp undergrowths and the
tangle of vines,
With such helpful assistance as deftly combines

Tender touch with brave strength, did he seek
out the way,
Striving hard all her turbulent fears to allay,
And soon reached the hotel, where by none was
it known
That Gladys, in sleep, from her chamber had
flown
In the wake of the storm, with her night-robe
around her,
Away to the spot where in slumber he found her.

XII

Perplexed and alarmed, Ethel sat in her room,
Watched the moments go by and conjectured
what doom
Had fallen on Conrad, and when in the hall,
With a sound that was music, she heard a foot-
fall,
Out she sprang, with a pale, anxious look on her
face,
And, winged like the eagle, she darted apace
To welcome the happy return. As her eye
Caught the image of Gladys she uttered a cry,

And, in hazy bewilderment seemingly lost,
Shrank back from the figure as if 'twere a ghost.
With her hands pressing hard on her pulsating heart,
She quivered in terror, as, struck by a dart,
The lovely gazelle sinks and shudders with pain,
All the sadder to see, from the beauty that's slain.

Soothed by words and embraces, and hastily told
Why at hour of midnight she came to behold
Such a strange apparition, she cried, "Would you know
Whom I fancied I saw in the pale, trembling glow
Of the moonlight—what vision, unearthly and bright,
So startled my senses and shook me with fright?"

"O Ethel, be silent," did Conrad exclaim,
"I know you are ready to breathe the dear name

That arose in my heart when, in shadowy light,
The image of Gladys beamed on my cold sight,
As she stood on the edge of the cliff."

XIII

Troubled rest
Told how forcibly Conrad that night was impressed
By his startling adventure. "O Heaven," he sobbed,
"Is it thus that the dear one of whom I was robbed—
The self of myself and the heart of my heart—
From whom in wild grief I was riven apart,
My Constance, who shone with such glory about her
That heaven were heavenless wholly without her—
Is it thus that on earth she is destined to live,
Her sway to exert and her helpfulness give?
O wrath, that away from my fainting soul bore her—

O mercy, that now to my life doth restore her—
Wrath implacable, wielding its terrible rod—
Mercy tender and great as the infinite God!
'Twas the awful bolt, hurled by unpitying Jove—
'Tis a dead world restored by compassionate love!"

Through the sobs that convulsed him and shook his stout frame
He whispered of Gladys, spoke Ethel's loved name,
First the one, then the other, profoundly revealing
Strange thoughts, in the ebb and the flow of his feeling.
As aforetime in Rama the loud lamentation
Was born of a grief that refused consolation,
Thus one moment he grieved as if life were accursed—
The next, from his lips words of ecstacy burst.
He had reached the great crisis, the momentous hour

That disclosed the resistless, mysterious power
With which artless Gladys was clothed. Like the reed
Whose pitiful struggles all fail to impede
The rush of the swift-flowing river, he bent
To the strength of emotions that fast came and went—
A victim of forces that must be obeyed,
Resisting them sternly and yet by them swayed.

XIV

Days gilded away and each came but to bless,
With its light and its warmth and its tender caress,
Ethel's life, which, enchanted and crowned with delight,
Soared and sang as the lark, in its rapturous flight,
Spreads its fresh, morning wings and mounts gaily on high—
Whose only barred cage is the earth and the sky.
Her nature was deeper, and brighter the glow

Of her blossoming face, while the deep, peaceful, flow
Of her newly-born bliss was the river serene,
Whose waters are crystal, whose depths are unseen.

Gladys showed by her words and her womanly ways
How just and deserving may be the warm praise
That a pure, perfect woman receives. In her glory complete,
Men and demons alike pause and kneel at her feet.
Each day letters came, and the one explanation
Was Gordon, who plainly employed his vacation
Not wholly in riding or reading or boating.
But rather in writing long missives and quoting
Sweet lines from the poets, who, judged as a class,
Are responsible often for what comes to pass,
Helping others, without any evil intent,
To say more at times than they probably meant.
Lest the ardent quotation should practice deceit,
'Twere well to first learn the degree of its heat,
For, as happens sometimes, one may quite act the fool

By transcribing crazed words not sufficiently cool.
Not December did Gordon's long missives imply—
They were simmering, sweltering, blazing July.
Gladys thought, but her thinking she did not impart,
Except as she thought into Ethel's true heart.

XV

Some days are slow paced, do not go fast enough;
They are clammy and cold, they are scaly and rough.
Other days, with each moment, tender beauty disclose;
They're the bright birds of paradise, plumaged in rainbows.
O days of the rainbow, the dells and the fountains,
Too swiftly for Conrad you flee from the mountains!

"O Ethel, O Gladys, adieu, fond adieus—
The paradise birds are not ours now to choose!"

Scene VIII.

In the City.

I

BACK in the noisy, man-made town,
Walls high and blank, smoke-fouled and brown,
A factory whose clattering wheels
With rattling speed are crazed and hot,
Where life its best and worst reveals,
Where money *is* and man *is not*—
There was but little to impart
Content to Conrad's harrassed heart.
He missed the ocean, missed the hills,
Woods, meadows, vales and romping rills.

II

A man within the city pent,
Whose mornings, noons and nights are spent
As if in prison serving time
To expiate some flagrant crime,

Is blind to nature's changing scene,
Earth, sky, and clouds that intervene,
And all the rich and floral blooms
That dress the fields and breathe perfumes.

His landscape is the dusty street,
The back yard is his cool retreat,
His trees are poles with wires strung,
His birds are poultry, old and young,
His bower where twilight lovers hide
Is in an alley five feet wide,
His charming rest in shaded gullies
Is under awnings worked with pulleys,
His brook, whose waters leap and sputter,
Is found in every city gutter,
And all his wide and open heaven
Is in a room ten feet by seven.

There in the country prospects fair,
Here in the city smudgy air;
There, grand old hills that prop the sky,
Here, buildings thirteen stories high;

There, purling streams that sing and prattle,
Here, draymen's carts that jolt and rattle;
There nature's hues of green and gold,
Here, whitewash, stucco, paint and mould;
There, growing shrubs with blossoms bright,
Here, iron lamp-posts bolt upright;
There, waving tops of elm and oak,
Here, chimney tops begrimed with smoke;
There, gurgling fountains on the lawn,
Here, draughts from rusty faucets drawn;
There, bird-songs heard on mossy banks,
Here, music played by organ cranks;
There, odors of the pink and rose,
Here, odors—different from those;
There, valleys, slopes and verdant plains,
Rare berries, vines and billowy grains;
Here, markets, shops and dirty stables,
Wheelbarrows, trolleys and car-cables!

Strange contrast now the seething town
To mountain glen with mossy down;
Yet where is marked the path of duty,
There all things wear the garb of beauty.

Where noble aims employ the hours,
Dull workshops turn to floral bowers,
Life's routine has its sanctities,
And labor's blows are symphonies.

III

Now to the anvil!—Conrad thought—
Life is a thing that must be wrought,
Must be hard hammered, must be moulded,
Its new and living shapes unfolded.
We cannot choose our fields, our sky,
Nor swerve the fate that shall deny
Our wish to find unvexed content,
And build our own environment.
I think, I guess—but do not know:
Child-like, I trust the winds that blow,
And if I'm blown to unknown strand,
It will be wiser than I planned:
The harbor waits, I know not where—
My home-bound bark will anchor there,
And gain, through harmless storms or calms,
The isles of spices and of palms.

IV

Until his summer friends arrived,
'Twere false to say that Conrad lived
By clocks that time the rising sun,
And tell his hours as they run.
Days were as years and moments, days—
The swift world blocked by strange delays.
All laws did clocks annihilate,
Stop fingers on the dial-plate,
And seemingly time's flight had fled,
Machinery silent, breathless, dead.
O watch-tick! More than age thou art,
When measured by a waiting heart!

Conrad's o'ershadowing depression
Craved free relief in frank expression.

[*Agitated, he writes.*

CONRAD TO GORDON.

Alone and lonesome, Gordon, it will be a kind
relief
For this poor heart to tell you of its mingled joy
and grief.

Would that my tongue could speak, and not this
rambling, halting pen—
Yet as you've borne with me before, so listen
now again.

What doubts and apprehensions in my troubled
spirit lurk!
Life's medicine I know is daily duty, daily work;
Yet when I make the effort it is slavish and
abhorrent,
For I am tossed, a broken reed, upon a raging
torrent.
When shall I see you—when be cheered by your
wished-for return?
The answer to this question from your last I
hoped to learn;
Yet not a word: O, if you knew the prison I
am in,
And how I wish the days would end before the
days begin,
You would not tarry at the shore and dream
your life away—
Compassion for your friend would bring you
here without delay.

A prison? Yes, a dungeon, chains, confinement solitary,
With only gold and palaces and splendors gay to vary
This everlasting dirge of hours that like a sad bell toll.
Men, aye, a half a million men—yet not a living soul!
But could my heart be satisfied, my feet would walk on thrones,
And sounds that smite and pain me like the rattle of dry bones,
Would turn to heavenly music. Fairest beauty then would glow
In soulless marble; breathing roses from dead walls would grow,
Stone pavements would be velvet, dungeon gloom the golden light,
And life, with thrill of ecstacy, would be a seraph's flight.

I know you'll say I'm foolish, weak and never satisfied,
A summer lunatic, unmanly, and had better hide

My heart, which quite too much is worn upon
my sleeve,
And give your ready sympathy a generous
reprieve.
But hear me: it is not that I am widely sepa-
rated
From Ethel and her tender love—not wholly
that: I'm fated—
It startles me!—it wrings each fiber of my poor
sick heart—
I'm fated—I who scorn such deed—to act a
double part.
Do not be staggered to receive this statement
from my hand,
And one which you, dear Gordon, cannot fully
understand:
It must be owned—it clamors, cries aloud to be
confessed—
And I'm a hypocrite! What wonder that I am
depressed?
What do I mean? Don't ask me—ask kind
Heaven to forgive,
Lest I should pray to be from self a hiding
fugitive.

Here let me end it, and perhaps it had been better far
Not to have drawn the curtain, thus so plainly laying bare
This deep abyss within me, wildly turbulent and raging,
This soul convulsion, world of chaos, gloomily presaging
Ruin dire and dark! I'll pause and will attempt no more—
I'm almost frenzied, Gordon, and your sympathy implore.

And yet I have deep wells of joy: 'tis when I feel the beat
Of woman's love, love that I know is not a bitter cheat.
Gentle and strong as light it is against my fevered breast—
O, tender Heaven, then I have at least a dream of rest!

Your pardon for these broken lines I crave, and now to you

I turn my thought, resolved that no disquiet
shall undo
The interest I feel in what perhaps concerns you
most,
Or cause me to forget my friend, though I am
tempest-tossed.
How do I live? I live on Ethel's letters day by day—
Enough to draw a spirit back if it had fled away
From heaven like a prodigal. I pray for her
return,
And all the more impatiently since I have chanced
to learn
That Gladys will attend her, yet why should my
spirit crave
Her presence who has subtle power my being
to enslave?
From Ethel I must take what is to queenly
Gladys given;
And nothing can I give: to this dilemma am I
driven.
Yet give I must, and in the giving something
must withhold,
And then the love I have professed must languish
and grow cold.

If I were in a jovial mood, I'd rally you, my friend,
And plainly hint at what I've heard, not wishing to offend:
Perhaps no meaning, Gordon, those swift letters have conveyed;
Believe me that no confidence I basely have betrayed,
For Gladys was discreet enough to bid her tongue be mute,
And no frank tales of hers you'll find it needful to refute;
The seal upon her lips was safe, and e'en if 'twere to get
The last word, she would not her golden silence e'er forget.
I call to mind the day you saw her first upon the beach,
Eyes rivalling the dawn, and cheeks, the fair sun-crimsoned peach;
I guess, good fellow, from that moment was her triumph sure,
Nor was an effort needed all your passion to allure.

Your feeling toward her may be love, but
mine is something more—
In her I see a holy image, something to adore.
And since I met her on that night within the
mountain glen,
I'm conscious that although but one, I yet infold
two men;
At least I seem a strange, divided, battling self
to be,
Bound fast by iron chains, though wildly strug-
gling to be free.

Do not be jealous if I tell you that I have
received
A song from Gladys, in the depths of which may
be perceived
The thoughts that flit like uncaged birds across
her boundless sky—
Lines that I venture to enclose, with all that
they imply:

Aurora flies from orient skies,
The soft winds through young ringlets blowing,

The moss-grown mill, beneath the hill,
Until the drowsy night, is going.
Grind, old mill, grind, the rumble never stilling,
Grind, grind, old mill, the hopper always filling.

The walls are gray with slow decay,
The noisy water still is flowing;
Grain of last year, it is not here,
And yet the busy mill is going.
Grind, old mill, grind, the full sacks always coming,
Grind, grind, old mill, the live wheels always humming.

One harvest wanes, yet other grains
By day and night are slowly growing,
Seeds do not sleep, the reapers reap,
And keep the braying millstones going.
Work on, work on, old mill, forever finding
Enough, from buds to frosts, for patient grinding.

'Twill prove at last when life is past,
Fields hid beneath the winter's snowing,
That all they grew, the seasons through,
The mill ground well, forever going.

Grind, old mill, grind, the hopper always filling,
Grind, grind, old mill, the rumble never stilling.

The dull sound of the millstones, Gordon, echoes in my soul;
To grind the *now* and the *to be*, for this God's mill-wheels roll,
And moments come when all the grinding is a rapture song,
And all the echoes are like notes of the celestial throng,
Unearthly melodies that strike and bound, and bound again,
And never prophet, listening, was thrilled by happier strain.
'Tis then I feel that all the ravellings and all the frowsy shreds,
The snarled criss-crosses, riddled knots, and all the tangled threads,
Will be unkinked, strung straight, each crumpled thread and twisted line,
To weave the rainbow pattern and work out the rich design.

Then something tells me that this faith is all
a dark delusion,
And suddenly the universe dissolves in blind
confusion,
All order is disordered, songless songs and light-
less light
Lie dead and cold, and morning is entombed in
speechless night.
O, could I keep the peaceful calm these shifting
moods deny,
O, could my spirit, winged by faith, above this
whirlwind fly!—
But weary you must be and vexed almost to
angry scorn,
That having such a life into my aching life new
born,
Crowned with the love of such a lover, I must
bow my head
As one from whose cold spirit every breath of
peace has fled.
Forgive me! Wrong it is I know. The jewelled
world is mine,
Yet with one world, or more, the soul can madly
weep and pine.

I struggle, struggle, and the struggle harder,
fiercer grows—
When, where and how is it to end? What
prophet dreams or knows?

And still I talk of bitterness—I said that I was
done—
No more, no more—my poor heart faints—I
scarcely have begun
To cast on you the shadows that around me
thicken deep,
And rob the day of sunshine and the night of
restful sleep.

I wait for you, my friend, for Ethel wait, for
Gladys wait—
Write me at once—say when you'll come—and
fix the happy date.
No more remains at present save my old-time
love to add,
With which assurance I remain, as ever, yours,

CONRAD.

V

As stirs the great sea when assaulted and
stormed,
From the lamb to the lion abruptly transformed,
Wild billows loud roaring and savagely leaping,
Mane whitened with foam on the hurricane
sweeping,
So Gordon's strong nature in giant wrath rose—
A friend swiftly changed to the fiercest of foes.
The terms of endearment by Conrad expressed,
Availed not to quiet his rage, or arrest
The suspicion which lately he could not suppress,
That the heart he was seeking gave ready access
To Conrad's attentions, debarring his own—
A thing often guessed, and now truthfully known:
So at least did his jealousy rashly conclude,
Assigning this cause why his suit, oft renewed,
Was treated so coldly.

Fixed now was the blame;
His anger was hot, and whenever the name
Of Gladys was mentioned, his burning cheek
paled,

And his form turned to steel, like an old figure
mailed
In grim feudal armor. With this very letter
Was one from the mountains affording no better
Occasion for hope than had others before,
That Gladys would cease his appeals to ignore,
And, warmed by the fires that glowed in his
breast,
Would respond to the fervent regard he professed.
What meant the wild words that by Conrad were
penned?
Was his fond adoration for Ethel to end?
That Gladys entranced him, this did he aver—
Had he stretched his mysterious sway over her?
The dark situation began to unfold,
Telling plainly why Gladys was distant and cold.

Gordon's jealousy flamed into furious rage,
And reason and hope were too weak to assuage
The grief and the anger, the passion and pain,
That rushed with quick throes through his heart
and his brain.
Unthinking, excited and desperate grown,
He hurried to catch the first train for the town.

Dread day. For the love of long years was now
broken,
Annulled were the brotherly vows so oft spoken,
And pleasure that life had been wont to afford,
Like the Hebrew King fell on its own fatal sword.

VI

Dying day breathed its sighs on the fresh
evening gale,
And soft fingers of twilight spread gently its veil
On the face of the world, now relaxing for rest,
As nestles the child by a mother caressed.
All days are historic. Another great day
From the glare and the uproar was fleeing away;
A calm inspiration was in the mild air,
And faint were the murmurs of languishing care.

Conrad sat in his room. 'Twas an hour for
thought.
His hand grasped a letter the postman had
brought,
Touching matters that Ethel was wont to relate,
Giving news from her jubilant heart down to date.

On his face was an anxious and desolate look,
His muscular hand with a strange palsy shook,
And each breath was a sigh. A loud knock on the door,
A quick, hurried entrance, unbidden, before
He could answer, and Gordon confronted his gaze.

"Welcome, Gordon," he shouted, "thrice welcome always!"
And extended his hand. Gordon shrank from his touch
As one, with a shudder, would flee from the clutch
Of a leper. His eyes darted looks that were dire—
Eyes kindled with rage—starry worlds all on fire.
Fierce and hot were the words which his chiding tongue uttered,
Loud and deep were the curses his wild anger muttered.
With brawny frame rigid and clenched, lifted hand,

He cried, "Between Gladys and me do you
stand—
You, Conrad, who swore by the powers of Jove
To give unto Ethel your unreserved love—
A man, I supposed, but a cheat as I find,
A hypocrite, knave and deceiver combined."

Conrad stood like a statue. A moment struck
dumb
With grief and surprise he could not overcome,
He stared at his foe and his pale lips were mute,
As silent, when broken, are strings of the lute.
Then he ventured to speak: "For the sake of a
friend—"

"Friend, friend!" shouted Gordon, "right
here is an end
To all friendship between you and me." Then
the blaze
Of his eyes deeper burned, as, in focus, the rays
Of the sun glare and glisten.

"I pray you one word;
Let me speak—'tis unmanly to strike till I'm
heard.

You charge me with motives deceitful and base—
You do it because you are not in my place.
The strange double part that my letter confessed,
Is spurned by each impulse within my deep breast:
This I told you in language decisive and plain—
Don't charge me so falsely with baseness again.
You rave, and it may be as friends we must part—
If—but no, you can never unriddle my heart;
Every soul is its own; what it suffers and feels,
The secrets it carries, the pain it conceals,
The struggles, the pinings, the conflicts, the fears,
The budding hopes blasted, life wasted in tears—
All this can another imagine or share?
The form I am clothed in, this form can you wear?"

Gordon heard, but the storm in his bosom grew fierce;
He sprang as if ready with dagger to pierce
The breast of the man who, he fancied, had foiled
His most cherished aim and had basely despoiled
His heart of its coveted prize. All the blood
Of the long generations that back of him stood,

The strong, warrior blood that helped fashion
the world,
Gave heat to his passion. His trembling lip curled,
And he muttered a vengeance and looked a cold
scorn,
That plainly from sense of injustice were born.
Such a man, with such feeling, and foaming with
wrath—
Better bow to his kingship and give him the path.

"Your letter," he thundered—"that told me
enough—
Explanations? I blow them away as the puff
Of thin, empty smoke on the tempest is scattered.
Excuse or defence—it is instantly shattered,
And that by confession direct from your pen—
Better far if your place were a blank among men.
Justice stern to this strong, iron arm is now
beckoning,
Heaven smite me this night if I don't have a
reckoning!"

Armed was Gordon, and ripe for the cold
work of death
Was the fury of spirit, now drawn from its sheath,

The jealous revenge of a desperate foe,
Who answers a word with a murderous blow.
Conrad's courage soon rallied, unblanched by the shock,
Rose even to calmness and stood like a rock.

"Granting all you have said to be true," he replied,
"The code of a gentleman you have denied,
And have chosen a method to settle disputes
Every precept of honor condemns and refutes."

Brave words, and provoking and galling as brave,
Not fitted to render the quarrel less grave.
A fierce agitation did Gordon betray,
An outburst of frenzy swept reason away,
And then with drawn weapon he took deadly aim,
The hate of a demon convulsing his frame.
The crack of the shot sounded out like a knell,
And, struck by the ball, Conrad staggered and fell.
Pleading looks with a madman could nothing avail—
Life and death at this moment were flung in the scale.

Down over his victim, with deadly intent,
Gordon, clasping his weapon, in hot vengeance bent.
"Hold!" Conrad exclaimed, and with uplifted hand,
Exerting such power as he could command,
Tried to ward off the missile of death. Not the face
Of a tiger, o'ertaking his prey in the chase,
Low crouching, wild glaring and ready to spring,
Not the swoop of the eagle on lightning-like wing,
Could picture the fury of Gordon's attack.
'Twas an instant when Conrad, if showing a lack
Of presence of mind, would have settled his fate.
Through his brain flashed a thought. In his terrible strait
He snatched from his bosom a portrait, now red
With warm blood, by his enemy ruthlessly shed;
'Twas the portrait of Constance. It met Gordon's eye—
The effect was electric—he uttered a cry,
And, moved by that magical face, turned away,
Grew paler than ever, as if in dismay

At his own crazy deed, and in silence knelt
down,
A look of remorse breaking through his dark
frown.

O'er his face an expression of wonderment
stole,
As if revelations had burst on his soul.
He thought of the being now light-clad and
sainted,
More fair than the vision of poet e'er painted,
And the sacred twin love of Conrad for his
sister,
A holier love since his anguished lips kissed her
In sad and yet beautiful death. And again
He saw Constance in Gladys depicted, as when,
From the balcony facing the deep azure ocean,
He caught the impression that sealed his devo-
tion.
Yet Gladys was Gladys—not Constance was
she—
What subtle, mysterious charm could there be,
That Conrad should own her omnipotent spell?
He was lost in thick darkness, unable to tell.

These thoughts in an instant subdued his stern will,
And through his crushed heart cold despair sent a chill.
He trembled—he wept, and his very soul moaned;
His deed and himself he in anguish disowned,
Sprang quick to his feet, pale as death with affright,
Fled swift from the house and was lost in the night.

Scene IX.

The Land of Shadows.

I

CONRAD tossed on his pillow, excited, distressed,
And the balm of a mother's love calmed him to rest.
So faithful and gentle the hand on his brow,
So vengeful the hand that had swift laid him low!
'Tis the mission of love to bind up and restore,
To land the wrecked voyager safe on the shore.
Happy he who, brought down to the valley of death,
Feels floating around him love's balm-giving breath!

News sped to the mountains. Alarmed, broken-hearted,
Both Ethel and Gladys abruptly departed,

And hurried away to the city. The train,
As it rushed like the tempest through forest and plain,
Speeding after the thought that had gone on before,
Seemed trying to flee from the sorrow it bore.

Ethel entered the room. 'Twas a sad, happy meeting,
Grief mingling its tears with the rapturous greeting.
The hours of anguish through which she had passed,
Weighed her down, as the whirlwind's unpitying blast
Smites the lily and crushes its beauty and bloom,
Laying low in the dust its immaculate plume.
The spirit of Conrad in weakness was strong,
And, breathing forgiveness, not wrath, for the wrong
He had suffered, spoke words of bright cheer,
And eagerly strove to suppress every fear
That darkened poor Ethel's sad face. Though his will
At the moment exerted its power to still

The emotions his letter to Gordon expressed,
Not with ease was the tumult within him repressed.
He was speechless awhile. Then he hopefully said,
"I'm assured that ere long I will rise from my bed,
And be active again."

Soon for Gladys he asked,
And though by the shock and unrest overtasked,
He greeted her warmly. A look, of grief born,
Veiled her face, as the glow of the luminous morn
Is muffled in clouds, while she strove to convey
By the grasp of her hand what her lips could not say.
Conrad's gaze was so eager, so long and intense,
That Gladys stood wrapped in a dreamy suspense,
Returning his look with unmingled surprise,
And reading deep thoughts in his riveted eyes.
Words of whole-souled affection she breathed in his ear,

Bade him patiently wait, gave a smile of good
cheer,
And withdrew from his gaze. In a moment her
cheek
Broke into a flame, and then turning to speak,
She stood like an angel, avenging the stroke
Of a jealous man's anger. The flood-gates all
broke,
And reproaches in torrents, like lava on fire,
Indignant denouncements and scorn, deep and dire,
Poured forth from her lips.

"Let his image forever
Be quenched in black darkness, and never, O
never
Appear to my vision again!"

As she spoke,
Seeming eager that instant to kneel and invoke
The justice of Heaven upon the foul crime,
She presented a picture impressive, sublime.

"Can I pardon that deed? Can I do it and
live?
If I were the Christ I, perhaps, could forgive!"

Conrad knew that poor Gordon was crazed.
All the pain
Would be pastime and pleasure could he but regain
The love of the one whose insane, jealous deed
Had stricken him down, and had made his soul bleed
With a pang and a sorrow no mortal can feel
From merely the wound of cold lead or sharp steel.

II

As a meteor, hot with the speed of its flight,
Burns out from the sky, then is buried in night,
So Gordon had come and had vanished. O, where
Can a spirit find refuge, escaping the glare
Of its own sleepless eye? Whither wander to hide
From itself, and in mystery ever abide?
What creation outside of the boundless creation
Can secretly give it unknown habitation?
This thinking, remembering, conscience-stung *I*—
This Gordon—O, is there a death he can die?

He is, and his past is, and so is his *now*—
He would flee from himself, but flee whither, and
how?

III

The summer flew south, leaving crystals of
snow,
Brooks, stilled by the frost, ceased to carol and
flow,
And the while Conrad languished, reviving at
length,
Regaining but slowly his long-wasted strength.
Ethel's schoolbooks were idle, and in the sick
room
She brought the sun with her, dispersing the
gloom.
Not the pen that writes Iliads, history's story,
Or praises a hero and wreathes him with glory,
Or tells of proud kings and of realms in com-
motion,
Could draw the rare picture of Ethel's devotion.
In the glare and the glamour, in clangors and
dins,
The world doesn't find its divine heroines.

The days were monotonous. "Long," Conrad
sighed,
"Have this couch and this prison-like chamber
denied
The pleasure of living, more golden than wealth,
That draws its sweet draught from the fountain
of health.
Yet, Ethel, no pain and no grief can destroy
In this turbulent breast the exhuberant joy,
That from love's gentle ministries blissfully flows,
Soothing suffering's pangs into peaceful repose.
Heaven's blessing be on you!"

As breaks through the night
The gleam of the light-house, exultant and bright,
So her face broke through sorrow's thick veil.

"I have thought
That my life was a failure, accomplishing naught.
Your misfortune is fortune to me, my fond lover,
And in the dense shadows my heart can discover
That sorrows which over one life darkly brood,
May be to another commensurate good."

Such her words, and a something unearthly there seemed
In the lustre with which her fair countenance beamed.

Then of Gladys she spoke, and her song of the mill,
The swift waters flowing, the wheels grinding still,
Ever grinding life's harvest and grinding it well,
Till the belfries of heaven shall sound the last knell.

IV

While Conrad grew strong, Ethel drooped, as the rose
Into one crimson passion its very life throws,
Breathing all the sweet beauty with which it was born,
And dies on the breast it was plucked to adorn.
"Too lovely for earth!"—The old saying we've heard,
Which must not be always considered absurd.
O, spare us endearments to which the heart clings,
O, spare us the bright and the beautiful things!

Or, if life is a sea that in barrenness swirls,
Let us think that somewhere in its depths are rare pearls!

The Pleiades—so runs the classical tale—
Were nymphs of the grove and the sweet, modest vale,
Who, after their beauty this planet had graced,
Among the far stars were by Jupiter placed;
Not less, but more worthy to shimmer above,
Had they known, as they did not, the passion of love!
Strangely cold is their gleam from the vault overhead,
As the glaze on the eye of the unfeeling dead.
More fit for the stars is a heart that *is* heart,
Of the infinite love a felicitous part.
The breast of all heaven was yearning. "O, come,"
Sighed the lone sister stars to fair Ethel, "Come home!"

"The curtains are rending," to Conrad she said,
"And the vision allays all the fever and dread.

Why so silent? Hard, is it, to speak of the ending?
Say, rather, the happy beginning is pending.
I am dying, my Conrad, I'm dying, yet why
My spirit should catch the bright signal to fly—
This is something dull faith must wait meekly to know—
Two mysteries blind me—I came, and I go."

"'Twere a much simpler problem," was Conrad's reply,
"If, torn from your ardent embrace, I should die;
To this did the forces all seem to combine,
And your own lovely life is more needed than mine."

"No, no!" she quick answered, and melted in tears,
"This thought in my soul's morning vista appears,
That blessing far greater for you is in store,
When my bark shall have touched the unseen, farther shore."

"You surprise me, dear Ethel, so patient, resigned,
So quick to believe that the millstones which grind

Our life's little harvest are grinding it well,
Though why your days end human thought cannot tell.
We query the silences, knock, wait and yearn;
Query still the blank dumbness, yet what do we learn?"

Transfigured was Ethel's pale face. As the star
Flings its soft, silver splendor from heaven afar,
Such her beauty had been; fading now the pure light
In the glory of morning, o'erwhelming the night!

"O, how easy," she whispered, "to linger and live,
If, by living, one joy to your heart I could give!
If, by living, one joy from your bosom would fly,
O, how easy to linger no longer, but die!"

To such lofty words Conrad could not respond;
It was more like a voice from the unknown beyond.
For the moment, the tempest within held its breath,
And calm was the deep of his soul far beneath;

The Constance within him, in sleep, was at rest,
The Gladys disturbed not his passionate breast.
In silence expressing the grief that he felt,
By the couch of the dying he tenderly knelt,
And pressed his warm lips to the lips that, ere long,
Were to utter their farewell and break into song.

From the window of Ethel, the eye, in its search,
Saw the strong, massive walls of a newly-built church.
Glancing up at the spire, she said, "Day by day,
While the long, weary weeks glided slowly away,
I have heard the harsh sound of the hammers that rang
With vexatious clamor and deafening clang—
Heard the din of the builders, all working apace
To get the tall pipes of the organ in place—
Heard the clatter and jargon, confused and sonorous,
Preparing the while for the sweet-sounding chorus.
It came on the air of this dear Sabbath morn—
A balm to my spirit, by questionings torn.

The dissonant noise 'tis not hard to explain:
'Twas the discord preceding the worshipful strain."

At that moment, for vespers, the great organ pealed,
And more clearly was Ethel's deep meaning revealed.
Now, in rapturous cadence the harmonies roll,
And the spell of the music entrances the soul.

"Be it so!" Conrad sighed. "When disorder, now rife,
Shall have fashioned and tuned this mysterious life,
O, then may we know the sweet meaning of sorrow,
And learn all its bliss in a brighter to-morrow!"

Conrad placed his strong arm underneath Ethel's head,
And in words half inspired she tranquilly said,
"The weak body must die, and had love been denied
To this famishing breast, then my spirit had died.

I live, though I die, yet had never known life,
Only agonized dreams, a heart's moaning and strife,
Save for love. 'Tis enough. But for this, the last breath
Would be only a passage from death unto death;
Now, from life unto life is my happy estate;
Could mortal or angel wish kindlier fate?"

She was gone—yet, not gone. For an instant restored,
To Conrad she smiled. As the bark that was moored
To the shore is unchained and swings out on the deep,
Whose soundless abysses their mysteries keep,
So she floated in silence away. Ere she passed
Down the distant horizon, with light overcast,
She waved her farewells. To her native home flying,
If this is named death, we will pine for the dying.

Scene X.

The Mystic Union.

I

ISLANDS nursed in the arms of the sea, rueful rocks,
Mountains stirred into life by deep volcanic shocks,
Jagged coast, torn in shreds, and repeatedly riven
By arrowy rivers from bleak highlands driven,
The home of the otter and seal, all unwarmed;
In turns, by white winter icicled and stormed—
Alaska, by right of her primeval birth,
A land of the lands that are mapped on the earth,
Yet poor, and of summery loveliness nude,
So waste that the Tropics claim no sisterhood—
A clime that most men are repelled by and shun,
Because half unmothered and spurned by the sun.

Far away to the North are God's sculptures
in ice,
Dome and pinnacle wrought in unearthly device;
Plains in solitude doze the slow eons away;
Sinks forest on forest with old-age decay;
From the range St. Elias peaks airily rise—
Those Babel ambitions that try for the skies.

II

Man rules not the world. As the thin thistle-
down,
By the breath of the hurrying wind is he blown;
Realms mock him. Cold granites and desolate
regions
Halt him, rout all his powers, outnumber his
legions.
With his ships, as swift shuttles, he cleverly
weaves
Together the continents. His bosom heaves
With the triumph; with pride is he pompously
flushed:
By dumb icebergs his shuttles are flung back
and crushed.

He can build templed cities, can do this and that:
He is conquered and killed by an atom-sized gnat.
To compass the earth does he strut and go forth:
He is less than the snowflakes that rule in the North.
Room for kingdoms is there—so his maps would determine:
It is mainly the home of the wild wolf and ermine.

Barbaric Aleuths, a degenerate race,
Form a part of the scattered and thin populace,
That wrestles with barriers bold nature rears
In the wastes of the North, on Alaskan frontiers.
There are climates in which men to cedars are grown;
Men are dwarfed, brawnless shrubs in the high Arctic zone;
Swathed in Indian bronze, they are rationed by trapping,
The rivers their storehouse, the dense furs their wrapping:
Yet human as Shakespeares, as Romanoffs crowned,
As brainy philosophers, fitly renowned—

Hearts couched 'neath the skins of the reindeer,
and souls
That claim kinship with any this side of the poles.

Forsaking dear homes, with a courage heroic,
With love whose example might well thrill a
Stoic,
Apostles, whose lives are a holy petition,
Brave dreary expanses and make it their mission
To seek these stray sheep on the mountains.
Unknown
Do they toil—and to this has our golden age
grown.

III

Bed of princess, and more, in the warm earth
was made,
When down in calm sleep, Ethel, re-born, was
laid.

"I have felt," Conrad said, "that my life was
a blight,
A convulsion that whelmed halcyon morning in
night.

One world now so rich, and the other so poor—
Hush, my tongue! Ev'ry anguish may have its quick cure.
On the graves of the past, packed to brim with our sorrows,
Life-roses may grow for to-days and to-morrows.
Myself I rebuke. Blighted being? Not so;
There is something to suffer, there's something to do."

Gladys answered: "The past is the world's broad-browed sage;
Each age is a Socrates for the next age.
I sit at the feet of my own confused past,
And from it the future attempt to forecast.
The lesson I've learned. Now my cold, marbled soul
Turns to flesh, and new eyes read the oracle scroll,
Where the finger of God pens the entries, and where
Revelations, as orbs burning through the night air,

Light my uncertain feet. From the *to* and the *fro*,
From the loves that are baulked, from the heart-tears that flow,
From life's shocks, empty voids, and its sparkless, dead ashes,
The dawn of new life on my gloomed vision flashes.
O, Conrad, I cry for the life truest, best—
Be this my ambition, and—perish the rest!"

In the throes of great conflict, a crisis of fate,
Conrad wrestled and trembled. 'Twere hard to translate
Into weak, paupered words all the mental upheaving,
The struggles, the frenzies, the depths of the grieving.
The resolve and the spirit of Gladys he shared,
Believing the mysteries through which he fared,
Had in them a meaning of manhood, a worth,
That sires new being, of far nobler birth.

With a soul's thousand arms, to fond Gladys he clung;
If changed were the past, bridal bells would have rung.
All silent the bells. And adoring he knelt
To the image of Constance, yet secretly felt
It were base sacrilege earthly love to avow,
And place the white wreath on her transfigured brow.
There's a union more subtle, more deep, more divine,
Than perchance is cemented by words at the shrine
Where the tie ceremonial, love's outward token,
Makes one of the twain whose warm vows have been spoken.
There's a bridal of hearts time nor change can dissever;
Forms break: there's a bridal forever and ever.

Gladys went on her errand. She knew 'twere enough,
Though in homeless exile and in climes cold and rough,

To have Conrad's strong presence. Her last, parting hours
Were calmed and sustained by invisible powers.
A courier, just in advance, did she go
To a half frozen realm where the slow glaciers flow.

As the mariner's needle turns toward the north star,
Ever constant and fixed in the heavens afar,
Conrad's thought and his love and his innermost being,
From all that environed him seemed to be fleeing,
And turned to one object. Each day was a martyrdom,
The city a desert, a prison the home;
Grandeurs, rubbish; fame, idle as winds; and heirships
Of fortune far less than one smile from the lips
That alone of all living this bliss could impart—
The sound of a voice that could reach to his heart,

Then away, swift away, as winged Hermes he flew,
And to faces that knew him he vanished from view.

IV

In a village low-cabined, smoke-colored and drear,
The home of the fisher and rough mountaineer,
The gray of the twilight was deepening fast,
And on-coming night, pinioned swift by the blast
That shot rains as if bullets with force wild and free,
Was folding in darkness the islands and sea.
By the light of a low, gasping flame Conrad stood,
The same as of yore, and yet changed was his mood.
Sweet heaven of peace was so deep in his face,
That agonies realized had scarce left a trace.

By his side was the radiant Gladys, more fair,
Even in the pale light's dim and wavering flare,
Than she was in the dawn of the magical hour,
When Conrad first felt her inscrutable power.

She answered his face, she lived in his lit eyes,
The twain one in effort and self-sacrifice:
Side by side—heart to heart—to love, labor and die,
Indivisibly one, yet by no outward tie.

V

A sudden, sharp cry, ending in a deep groan,
As if an abrupt, irrepressible moan
From ev'ry rough beam of the cabin were wrung!
To her feet, terror-struck, Gladys instantly sprung,
And the dull faced Aleuths, women, children and men,
Cringed and shook as if dreading the wild wail again.

In a cold, unlit corner, sick, haggard and worn,
His long hair thick matted, his coarse garments torn,
Lay a stranger, weak, friendless and ready to die.
Conrad caught the dull glare of his hollow, glazed eye,

As he stood there. "I know you!" the lank
figure gasped.
His lean bony hands were convulsively clasped,
And his ev'ry nerve quivered. In accents of
fear
He muttered, "I know you—and how came
you here?
O, God, am I mad, and is this the first gleam
Of reason returning, or is it a dream?"
Then he said in a tone of unmingled affright,
"Of Heaven's forgiveness you've spoken to-
night—
Is there any forgiveness for me?"

In amaze
Gladys fixed on the stranger her deep-piercing
gaze.
It was but for a moment. "'Tis Gordon!" she
cried,
And swooning away, she sank down by his side.
Conrad seemed turned to stone. Then regain-
ing command
Of his will and his strength, he extended his
hand,

Lifting Gladys again to her feet, and meanwhile,
Staring mutely and doubting, tried to reconcile
The face there before him with that of the one,
Who had been his fond friend in the days that were gone.
Yes, a face, human face, yet what writing was there—
Face ghastly and seamed with a tale of despair!

"Are you Gordon?" he whispered. With agonized sigh,
And a sob irrepressible came the reply:
"I am Gordon." The blackness of night was abroad.
Forsaken the cabin. The villagers, awed
By a scene so mysterious, hastily fled,
As from an abode of the pestilent dead.

Earth has braggart Senates and loud Parliaments,
That gravely pass measures for half continents.
Earth pictures its battles, re-writes them in story,
And makes of the victories annals of glory.

The world is a fool, and it gads after deeds,
That rank with ideal achievements as weeds
Are eclipsed by proud oaks. In the cabin that night—
Three hearts in great conclave until morning's light—
Thoughts deeper than histories, volumed and read,
Were breathed in half silence by Gordon's low bed.

Once a friend—then a foe—then a wrecked fugitive!
O, Gordon, sometimes the worst death is to live!
Yet, Gordon you are, and the Gladys who swore
That only the Christ could forgive and restore—
Not she—is now standing as if in his place,
With tears, more than pearls, beams her love on your face,
And her very heart breaks with forgiveness and joy.
Neither heaven nor earth knows more holy employ

Than to re-create Gordons. You hope now, you
live,
Since Conrad and Gladys can love and forgive.

VI

Storm and night were both past. It was
jubilant morning,
And auroral flashes, the wide East adorning,
Touched and goldened the earth, and the sun
flew apace
To catch the new meaning in Gordon's changed
face.
A spirit, self-cursed, and oe'r wastes doomed to
roam!
A wandering spirit, returned to its home!

It was morning. The beautiful world, gemmed
with dew,
As when first the stars sang, was created anew,
And, bathed in the glowing reflection of love,
Was twinned with the heaven of heaven above.
Spoke Conrad, spoke Gladys, spoke Gordon, the
three:
"The meaning of heaven now dawns upon me!"

Conrad said as the hand of his Gladys he took,
Giving earth, then the azure a long, eager look:
"'Tis enough. Two bright worlds does my vision survey:
'Tis enough. Two bright worlds do I tenant to-day."

It was evening at length, and still harped the glad gales,
Still purled dulcet brooks in the cool, verdant vales,
Still sang the vast sea, and when day-dreams had fled,
The night, ere it slept, lit the suns overhead.